AN ANALYSIS OF THE VIEWS OF AL-GHAZĀLĪ, IBN AL-'ARABĪ AND MAWLĀNĀ RŪMĪ ON THE CONCEPT OF JUSTICE

Adalet Kavramı Konusunda Gazali, İbn Arabi ve Mevlana'nın Görüşlerinin Bir Analizi

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Abstract

The concept of justice has always been one of the central issues that have occupied the minds of many philosophers, social scientists and political writers from the ancient to the modern times. So far most of the studies appear to have focused on the meaning and definition of this pivotal concept, as well as its social, economic and political implications. Several prominent Muslim philosophers in the past, such as al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Rushd, Abū Miskawayh, and Naṣīr al-Din Ṭūsī, devoted a significant segment of their political and ethical writings to the subject-matter of justice, which they treated and examined more or less in a similar fashion as the ancient Greek philosophers, especially Plato and Aristotle, had done. Like them, they developed a rational conception of justice, which is generally viewed as natural, eternal, and immutable and ethically as the most comprehensive virtue. Muslim theosophers or Sufi philosophers, such as al-Ghazālī, Ibn al-'Arabī and Mawlānā Rūmī, have initially conceived justice in the same form as the philosophers just-mentioned above and, as will be seen in this study, elaborated it further mainly within the context of metaphysical wisdom that is eternally implanted by God in the universe. Then later, on the basis of their own interpretations of the relevant verses of the Qur'an and the Prophetic sayings, they developed their conception of justice.

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Öz

Adalet kavramı her zaman filozofların, sosyal bilimcilerin ve siyaset yazarlarının zihnini meşgul eden önemli problemlerden biri olmuştur. Şimdiye kadar yapılan çalışmaların çoğu, bu temel kavramın, sosyal, ekonomik ve politik açılımları kadar anlamı ve tanımı üzerine yoğunlaşmış gözükmektedir. Kindî, Fârâbî, ibn Sinâ, Ebû Miskeveyh ve Nasirüddin Tûsî gibi Müslüman filozoflar, yazılarının önemli bir kısmını adalet konusunu ayırıp, onu bir bakıma özellikle Eflatun ve Aristo gibi antik Yunan filozofları ele alıp incelemişlerdir. Onlar gibi, genelde tabii (doğal), ebedi ve sabit-değişmez, ahlaken de en kapsamlı bir erdem olarak algılanan rasyonel bir adalet kavramı geliştirmişlerdir. Gazâlî, ibn Arabî ve Mevlânâ gibi mutasavvıf-filozoflar ise, adaleti başlangıçta, tıpkı yukarıda zikredilen filozoflara benzer bir şekilde kabul edip, Tanrı'nın âleme ebedî olarak yerleştirdiği, metafiziksel hikmet bağlamı içinde yorumlayıp açıklamışlardır. Daha sonar, Kur'an'ın ilgili ayetleri ve Hz. Peygamber'in sözlerine getirdikleri yorumlar üzerine, kendi adalet kavramını geliştirmişlerdir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Adalet, hikmet, sosyal adalet, metafiziksel hikmet metafiziksel adalet, mizan, zulm, Gazâlî, ibn Arabî, Mevlânâ Rûmî

> *...Our Lord is He Who gave to each (created) thing a form and nature, and further, gave (it) guidance.* (Qur'an 20:50)
>
> *Give to everyone his due and to everything its due.* (The Prophet Muhammad)
>
> *Nothing has been created except in the placement intended for it.* (Al-Ghazālī)
>
> *Justice is the truth through which the heavens and the earth have been created.* (Ibn al-'Arabī)
>
> *What is justice? Giving water to trees. What is injustice? To give water to thorns.* (Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī)

Introduction

In the history of humanity justice has always been a central subject of investigation for philosophers, theologians, social scientists, legists, ethicists, and politicians, as well as for many other intellectuals. Almost every religious tradition has dealt with this issue from various angles and at various levels. But it is most probably the Islamic tradition that has devoted, relatively speaking, the greatest number of literary works to explaining and elaborating of the vital question of justice.

Likewise, the overwhelming majority of Muslim thinkers from the classical to the modern period have in one way or another turned their attention to this question. Not surprisingly, for the objective of the Islamic religion, which has often been viewed as a religion of law, has been to establish a "just society" on earth. Moreover, the twin sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the Sunna, with their numerous moral exhortations on justice, offer Muslims a reasonably balanced worldview and thereby aim to educate them as to how to conduct themselves as responsible vicegerents in this world and how to lead a life of peace and justice in preparing themselves for the world to come.

In constructing and developing their theories of justice most of Muslim thinkers have benefited immensely from these two primary sources, though certain philosophers like al-Kindī, al-Fārābī,[2] Ibn Sīnā,[3] Ibn Rushd,[4] Abū Miskawayh,[5] and Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī,[6] have focused

[2] The following works can be consulted on this subject: Al-Fārābī. *Fusul al-Madani: Aphorisms of the Statesman.* Ed. With Translation, Introduction and Notes by D.M. Dunlop. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1961; Najjar, Fauzi M. Trans. "Alfarabi: The Political Regime (*Al-Siyāsat al-Madaniyya*)," in *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook.* Eds. Ralph Lerner and Muhsin Mahdi. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972, pp. 31-57; Muhsin Mahdi, trans. "Alfārābī: The Attainment of Happiness," in *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook,* pp. 58-82.

[3] See for details, Michael E. Marmura, trans. "Avicenna, Healing: Metaphysics X," "Avicenna on the Proof of Prophecies and the Interpretation of the Prophets' Symbols and Metaphors," in *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook,* pp. 98-111; 112-121.

[4] Ralp Lerner, trans. *Averroes on Plato's Republic.* Ithaca: Cornell University, 2005.

more narrowly on a particular notion of justice as conceived by such Greek philosophers as Plato and Aristotle. The philosophical conception of justice they have envisioned can be squared with the religious notion of justice, just as the truth of philosophy can be reconciled with that of religion, as some of the above-noted philosophers have already demonstrated.

It is not our intention to discuss the views of these philosophers here; that would go far beyond the scope of a short paper as this. We prefer instead to concentrate on the conception of justice in Muslim mystics, and particularly the views of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), who has been well recognized in the traditional Islamic scholarship as *Ḥujjat al-Islām* (the Proof of Islam), Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn al-ʻArabī (d. 638/1240), who has been generally called among Sufis *al-Shaykh al-Akbar* (the Great Master), and Muḥammad Jalāl al-Dīn (d. 672/1273), who has been hailed in the Muslim world as Mawlānā and in the West as Rūmī. As we will soon see, these great mystic thinkers of Islam not only offer a universal and holistic picture of justice, but base their understanding of it on the verses of the Qur'an, even though they share certain philosophical views as well.

The Philosophers' Conception of Justice: a brief overview

Before analyzing their views, let us summarize the Muslim philosophers' conception of justice in general. Under Greek and neo-Platonic influences, Muslim philosophers developed a rational conception of justice, which is seen as natural, eternal, and immutable and which is therefore comparable to and in harmony with divine justice. Justice derived from reason, in their eyes, either corresponds with or expresses justice based on revelation. After all, it is reason that provides the rationale for *jus divinum* (divine law). Since God has originally

[5] Abū ʻAlī Miskawāayh, *An Unpublished Treatise of Miskawayh on Justice or Risāla fī Māhiyat al-ʻAdl li Miskawayh*. Khan, M.S. Ed. With translation, notes, annotations Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1964; Bat, Baruddin. *Abū ʻAlī Miskawayh: A Study of His Historical and Social Thought*. New Delhi: Islamic Book Foundation, 1991.

[6] Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Tūsī, *The Nasirean Ethics.* Trans. From Persian by G.M. Wickens. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1964.

implanted reason in human beings, rational justice is thereby inspired by God as well.

Justice, for almost all the Muslim philosophers, is not only the most vital but the most comprehensive virtue of all, or as Plato defines it, 'the sum of all virtues.' Like other significant virtues, such as 'wisdom,' 'temperance,' 'courage,' and 'fortitude,' justice too is a quality indispensable for all human beings. As an essential and natural virtue, justice is intimately associated with 'truth,' 'right,' and 'good,' as with its opposite, injustice (*jawr*) or tyranny (*ẓulm*), which is accidental and anomalous, and is linked with 'false,' 'wrong,' and 'evil.' Justice can thus be expected to be found in virtually all things. Besides, human acts can be measured in terms of justice and often classified either as extreme and excessive or insufficient and deficient, depending on how far they exceed the limit of justice or fall behind it.

On the other hand, the overall aim of justice, be it rational, natural, or divine is, according to the Muslim philosophers, to lead man to attain happiness in this world and in the hereafter. In this sense, justice goes far beyond the boundaries of ethics and enters into the domain of politics. That is why Muslim philosophers, following Aristotle and Plato, developed their theories of justice in three successive stages, beginning with ethics (*akhlāq*), proceeding through economics (*tadbīr al-manzil*), and culminating in politics (*siyāsah*). In so doing, they have demonstrated the role and significance of justice for the wellbeing of every individual man, every family and every society.

Justice as an essential virtue, they insisted, is a prerequisite for the perfection of man, of family, and of society. When man, for instance, establishes harmony and justice within himself and his own faculties, he can conduct his life intelligently, wisely, and moderately. Likewise, if the relationships among the members of a family rest on justice and fairness, the family can grow in excellence. By the same token, when a society is governed by a just ruler in a just political order, it realizes its own perfection and thus attains happiness. If the distribution of the positive qualities that all may partake of, such as honor,

wealth, security, , is done with justice, about the result will be happiness in society.

Muslim philosophers, furthermore, link their rational conception of justice with divine justice. The former, they argue, if fully understood and realized in its ideal form, can ultimately be equated with the latter, which is in reality the fountainhead of all justice. They also insist that a just law is necessary for the implementation and maintenance of justice in a given society. Such a law should be capable of fulfilling both the worldly and otherworldly needs of the citizens. This in turn can only be made possible through Revealed Law. But even this Law alone is not enough to insure justice, unless it is enforced by a just ruler who is equipped with the highest human qualities and who will treat all men equally. At this juncture, Muslim philosophers, as it is seen, conjoin theoretical justice with practical justice. To bring about justice, in their view, is to pave the way for the realization of all virtues.

The above presents a sketchy outline of the conception of rational justice held by Muslim philosophers. Far from being exhaustive, this account is an approximate synopsis of the views of al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, and Ibn Rushd on justice in their major philosophical works. Despite their differences, it is possible to describe the commonalities, shared by all, on the meaning and ethical and political implications of justice, as we have tried to do here. Now we may turn to the three prominent Muslim mystics, Al-Ghazālī, Ibn al-ʻArabī and Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and examine their views of justice as systematically as possible.

Al-Ghazālī, Ibn al-ʻArabī and Mawlānā Rūmī on the Concept of Justice

To begin with, the three Sufi thinkers whom we have chosen for analysis appear to agree on the definition of justice that has already been enunciated by philosophers, which can be interpreted as ‘putting a thing in its proper place’ or, as a noun, simply referring to a middle

path or a moderate action or a mean that lies between two extremes.[7] In this latter sense it is used to designate the same meaning as implied in the word "wisdom" (*ḥikma*), to which both Al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-ʻArabī draw our attention, when they speak of God's justice. To give each thing its due, says Ibn al-ʻArabī, is justice, to act as is proper and do what is proper is wisdom. God as the Just (*al-ʻAdl*) puts everything in its proper place and as the Wise (*al-Ḥakīm*) "He does what is proper for what is proper as is proper."[8]

Although these two names are separate from each other in terms of their respective individual status regarding their applications, they share a single inextricable purpose and meaning. So much so that one entails the other: whosoever is just, whether God or man, is naturally expected to be wise. Moreover, in conjunction with these two names, the Just and the Wise, our thinkers discuss another important name, the Knowing (*al-ʻAlīm*), which is, they believe, essential for the function of the two preceding ones. This means that justice itself cannot be adequately understood without taking into account the implications of the other two names. That is why our analysis of justice has considerable bearing on these two and other relevant names of God.

Even a cursory glance at the major writings of the three Muslim mystics under review, reminds us of their enormous preoccupation with justice in creation, or to put it more precisely, with God's Justice in creation. Wherever there is justice, as they hold unanimously, it is nothing but the manifestation of God's Name "the Just." This is so obvious that it can be easily noticed in the creation of the earth and the heavens, as well as all that is between the two. Besides, a just action can only proceed from one who is just. Since God is, par excellence, just every action that emanates from Him must likewise be just. Because of this obvious fact, no one, as Al-Ghazālī asserts based on several verses of

[7] The same definition is found in almost all the classical technical dictionaries of Islam. See for instance, al-Jurjānī, *al-Taʻrīfāt,* p. 161.

[8] Ibn al-ʻArabī, *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya,* 2/163.26; trans. By W. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge,* p. 174.

the Qur'an,[9] can ever detect any fault, error or rift in the creation of the earth and the heavens, all of which proceed from and hence display God's just actions.[10]

Another significant common characteristic of the three sages is that they all attempt to demonstrate God's pervasive justice in creation at two levels, one macrocosmic and the other microcosmic: one is exhibited in the world and the other in the human body. The famous Qur'anic verse, "We shall show them our signs on the horizons and within themselves" (Fuṣṣilat 41:53), constitutes the very basis of this fact. Anyone who observes carefully and closely these two realms, they declare, will be able to witness the harmony and regularity that is inherent in them. Such harmony for them is in reality a reflection of the beauty of the divine presence. In the two realms "God," as the Qur'an succinctly puts it, "has given each thing its [due or just] creation."(Ṭā Hā 20:50) That is to say, because God is Generous (*al-Karīm*) and the infinitely Good (*al-Raḥmān*), He has granted to each thing its own existence or creation, and since He is the Just (*al-ʿAdl*), He has placed them in an order suitable to them.[11] It follows that the very order (*tartīb*) or the balance (*mīzān*) that exists among all things in the universe is due to the justice of God. If we look more carefully again at the world, Al-Ghazālī further explains, we will be overwhelmed and even bewildered by the subtlety and delicacy of the order prevalent in the various categories of existing beings. From the very beginning of the creation God had set up this sublime order according to which He arranged all the bodies, the spiritual and the physical alike, by placing, for instance, the earth at the lowest level and water above it and air above

[9] Some of these verses to which Al-Ghazālī alludes are: "It is He Who has created seven heavens in full harmony with one another: no fault will you see in the creation of the Most Gracious. And turn your vision [upon it] once more: can you see any flaw? Turn your vision [upon it] again and yet again: [and every time]your vision will fall back upon you, dazzled and truly defeated….And, indeed, We have adorned the skies nearest to the earth with lights…" (al-Mulk 67: 3-5) "We have adorned the skies nearest to the earth with the beauty of stars." (al-Ṣaffāt 37:6)

[10] Al-Ghazālī, *The Ninety-Nine Names Beautiful Names of God (a-Maqṣad al-asnā fī sharḥ asmā Allāh al-ḥusnā)*. Trans. By D. B. Burrell and N. Daher. Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1992, p. 92.

[11] Al-Ghazālī, *The Ninety-Nine Names,* p. 92.

the water and the heavens above the air. Such an arrangement is the most fitting for all and as such cannot be reversed.[12]

In expounding on the same subject, Ibn al-'Arabī brings another verse from the Quran into the discussion, giving it a somewhat unconventional yet quite valuable interpretation. "We have not created the heavens and the earth and that between them except in truth (*ḥaqq*)" (Al-Ḥijr 15:85). In his opinion, *haqq* (truth) means justice (*'adālah*) or God's eternal Justice, by which He has brought the Creation into being. To explain further, God has created each thing in accordance with what the nature of that thing requires and demands, or in accordance with what is most fitting for its creation.[13] That is why in the other verse quoted earlier, "Our Lord is He who gave each thing its form" (Ṭā Hā 20:50), this point has been more explicitly emphasized. It should be understood, therefore, from these verses that God as the Just has given each thing what is due and most appropriate to its inner nature. For all beings, Ibn al-'Arabī asserts, by their very essences demand to be determined and measured out commensurate with their own natures. This is in fact the perfection and the wisdom of existence (*ḥikmat al-wujūd*), which consists essentially in God's Names, the Just and the Wise. Had He not put everything in its proper place, He would not have given wisdom its full due.[14] After all, "the name Wise arranges affairs within their levels and places things within their measures."[15]

In order to further illustrate the importance of the order and justice in creation, Al-Ghazālī urges every man to examine his own body, which is, he says, also created in a as justly and proportionately arranged form, and composed of diverse members, as the universe is composed of diverse bodies. If you decompose the human body, you can see the major elements of its composition in the form of bone,

[12] Ibid., p. 93.

[13] Ibn al-'Arabī, *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya,* 2, p. 61.

[14] Ibn al-'Arabī, *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya,* 2/163.19; trans. By W. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge,* p. 174.

[15] Ibn al-'Arabī, *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya,* 2/435.15; trans. By W. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge,* p. 174.

flesh, and skin. When they are closely examined, it will be seen that God has placed these three layers over one another in a justly and harmoniously designed order. To provide an internal support for the body, He placed bone, which He covered and protected with flesh, which He in turn enclosed and safeguarded with skin. Should this order ever be reversed, should what is within be on the outside, the body would be no longer sustainable.[16]

Al-Ghazālī goes farther still, and attempts to demonstrate God's justice in the placement of every organ and limb on the human body. As we have mentioned previously, the creation of all of these organs, such as hands, feet, eyes, nose, and ears, is due to the Generosity of God, whereas their arrangement and placement in the human body as they are can be attributed to His Justice. So, since He is just, He has placed the eyes in the front side of the head just under the forehead, as it was the most suitable and most justly fitting place for them. Had He put them somewhere else, say for instance, in the back of the head or on the top of the head, many unexpected shortcomings and terrible damage would have befallen the operation of the human body. Again, let us imagine that if God had suspended the hands and arms from the head or the loins or the knees, instead of the shoulders, what would have happened? There would have been, replies Al-Ghazālī, a huge imbalance in the body. Or take the senses and think what would have been the result if God had placed them in the feet, rather than in the head? Their arrangement as such would have been definitely and completely upset. So, putting these organs somewhere else or in places outside their originally fixed locations would not only cause unnecessary malfunction in the body but create an untenable imbalance in the human system overall. For the usefulness and the perfect function of every organ and limb depends on its orderly and just placement. In the event of the removal or alteration of such order and placement, there would occur deficiency and ugliness in the body, if it did not become entirely disorderly. Therefore, God, Al-Ghazālī stresses vigorously, placed all the senses, organs

[16] Al-Ghazālī, *The Ninety-Nine Names*, p. 93.

and limbs in their rightful locations. To put it in a nutshell, "nothing has been created except in the placement intended for it."[17]

Rūmī's definition of justice reiterates that already formulated by his predecessors: everything must be put in its proper place.[18] However, he lifts this definition from its form as sheer abstraction and makes it more practical and concrete. Asking the question, "what is justice?" he replies "it is giving water to trees." He asks again, "what is injustice?" and answers, "to give water to thorns."[19] For Rūmī, justice is the bestowal of a gift while injustice is the cause of a disaster. He says, "justice is bestowing a bounty in its proper place, not on every root that will absorb water. What is injustice? To bestow it in an improper place that can only be a source of calamity."[20]

By virtue of this principle of justice, there is an impeccable order and harmony in the entire cosmos, spanning the world as macrocosm and man as microcosm as has we have already noted. "If you remove an atom from its proper place, stresses Rūmī, the whole world may fall apart." Therefore, every individual must be careful about everything he does and every step he takes, since he is, like every other being, an integral member of this universe which is not only orderly in itself as a whole but is also created according to the principle of justice that has originally assigned to him his proper place. In Rūmī's *weltanschauung*, as far as the creation of the world is concerned, there is no room whatsoever for vanity and irregularity. To put it in more precise terms, from the very inception of God's creation of the universe—"His producing the sky from non-existence and His spreading the carpet of the earth and making lamps of the stars"---with all its hidden and visible structures, this immutable principle of justice has existed and will continue to exist as long as human beings respect it and refrain from violating it. What may appear to have changed are the succeeding gen-

[17] Al-Ghazālī, *The Ninety-Nine Names*, p. 94.

[18] "What is justice? To put (a thing) in its (right) place. What is injustice? To put it in its wrong place." Rūmī, *Mathnawī* 6/596; see also 6/1558.

[19] Rūmī, *Mathnawī* 5/1090.

[20] Rūmī, *Mathnawī* 5/1091.

erations and peoples, as they have been replaced and supplanted by others, as Rūmī himself articulates:

> *Know that (the world of) created beings is like pure and limpid water in which the attributes of the Almighty are shining.*
>
> *Their knowledge and their justice and their clemency are like a star of heaven (reflected) in running water.*
>
> *Kings are the theatre for the manifestation of God's kingship; the learned are the mirrors for God's wisdom.*
>
> *Generations have passed away, and this is a new generation; the moon is the same moon, the water is not the same water.*
>
> *The justice is the same justice, the learning is the same learning too; but those generations and peoples have been changed.*[21]

God's immutable justice thus permeates all that exists between the earth and the heavens, the corporeal and the immaterial, whether it belongs to the world of creation (*khalq*) or to that of command (*amr*). After all, these are but loci for the manifestation of God's Names, Attributes and Acts. Man, alone among all of them, is what Rūmī describes as 'the astrolabe of the Divine attributes, as his very nature is the theatre for His revelations.'[22]

Rūmī's conception of justice, as has thus far been noted, is quite congruent with that of Al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-'Arabī. Compared to them, however, he expresses his views, for all his poetic style, in straightforward and concrete terms, employing more practical and substantive examples. Like Al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-'Arabī, Rūmī too firmly holds to the generally-accepted Ash'arite theological position that justice lies in the nature of all beings; as such it is the foundation of all Creation. Everything and every being, even every limb of an animal or a man, are created on the principle of justice, which may occasionally be described as a well-measured scale and balance. Every organ of a

[21] Rūmī, *Mathnawī* 6/3172-76.

[22] Rūmī, *Mathnawī* 6/3138.

human being, declares Rūmī, is created according to the principle of justice and hence it naturally performs its function in accordance with that principle. Man, he therefore admonishes, must always bear in mind the value of justice for his own good. It is not right, for instance, to apply collyrium to the ear, as it is most fitting for the eye. Nor is it appropriate to demand the work of the heart from the body.[23] "The shoe belongs to the foot, and the cap belongs to the head."[24] Again, the milk of the human beings comes from the breast (the upper half), whereas the milk of the ass comes from the under-half (or lower part).[25]

For Rūmī the division and distribution of the means and subsistence for all creatures is the result of the Divine Justice. Alluding to the verse of the Qur'an, "It is We who portion out their means of livelihood among them in the life of this world…" (Zukhruf 43: 32), he stresses that since God is the just dispenser ('*adl-i qassām-ast*), there is neither compulsion (*jabr*) nor injustice (*ẓulm*) in His dispensation.[26] Every human, therefore, earns his own share (*kismet*) as decreed according to Divine Justice, which 'has eternally put everything in its right place.'[27] "The Justice of God has mated (coupled) every one (with one of his own kind)-elephant with elephant and gnat with gnat."[28] "How can the justice and kindness of the Creator approve that a rose should fall down in worship and prostrate to a thorn?"[29]

In commenting on the verse, "Allah suffers not the reward to be lost of those who do good," (Al-Tawbah 9:120), and on the ḥadīth, "the Pen has dried after writing (the words)," Rūmī takes up discussion of one of the most crucial issues of Islamic theology, God's predetermination of human acts (*qadar*) and man's responsibility and ac-

[23] Rūmī, *Mathnawī* 5/1095.

[24] Rūmī, *Mathnawī* 6/1887.

[25] Rūmī, *Mathnawī* 4/1642.

[26] "This is the Justice of the Dispenser and it is an act of (just) dispensation: the wonder is this, that (in the Divine Dispensation) there is neither compulsion nor injustice." Rūmī, *Mathnawī* 4/1643)

[27] Nicholson, *Mathnawi Commentary* on Book IV, couplet 1643.

[28] Rūmī, *Mathnawī* 6/1894.

[29] Rūmī, *Mathnawī* 2/3332.

countability for his acts. From his analysis of both of the above-cited verse and the ḥadīth we can glean his understanding of theological justice. These texts, which are susceptible to several interpretations and hence open to misunderstanding, should be examined within the overall context of the Qur'an and the Sunna. The purpose of the Prophet's saying, 'the Pen has dried' is, for Rūmī, to incite and encourage man to perform his duties well and work hard and not to blame God for his own passivity and failure. What the Prophet intended to convey is that the Pen wrote and decreed the immutable rule that "every action has the effect and consequence appropriate to it."[30] "The Pen has dried (after writing), so that if you do wrong (in this world) you will suffer wrong (in the next), and that if you act rightly (here) the result will be your felicity (there)."[31] The Pen has made the distinction between good and evil, right and wrong, justice and injustice, which are not equal in the eyes of God. If someone behaves unjustly, he suffers from it. If he acts justly, it serves for his blissful end. When a person drinks wine, he becomes intoxicated with it. On all of these worldly matters and others the Pen has indeed dried, i.e. ceased to write any further than what God's universal Justice has decreed. This being the case, then, Rūmī asks, "how should the meaning of the Pen has dried be this, that acts of perfidy and acts of faithfulness are alike?"[32] Moreover, while the entire Qur'an consists of injunctions and prohibitions, 'are all of these, again he asks, addressed to stones and brickbats?'[33]

Let us now examine more closely the ramifications of God's Justice and better witness how Rūmī, like Al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-'Arabī before him, places it at the center of his worldview. God's Justice puts everything in its proper place, i.e. the place, which, as William Chittick has rightly remarked, "it occupies with Him for all eternity."[34] That is to say, Divine Justice unites everything with is very self as well as with

[30] Rūmī, *Mathnawī* 5/3131-32.

[31] Rūmī, *Mathnawī* 5/3133.

[32] See for a detailed coverage of this matter by Rūmī, *Mathnawī* 5/3134-3164.

[33] Read further Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, 5/2912 ff.

[34] Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love,* p. 94.

its Source. It is precisely on account of this eternal Justice that there exists a principal law, called congeneity (*jinsiyyat*), which is operative among all things and beings and according to which every kind seeks and attracts its own kind. So, good goes with good and evil with evil, or as the Qur'an states, "Women impure are for men impure, and men impure for women impure and women of purity are for men of purity and men of purity are for women of purity."(al-Nūr 24:26) Here we find Rūmī combining God's Justice with His decree and subsuming them both under His Wisdom (*al-Ḥikma*), without making any distinction between the two. In his eyes neither the former nor the latter are ever subject to change. However, this should not lead us to form an incorrect opinion about Rūmī's position on God's eternal decree, as if he were advocating a form of determinism, which in fact he flatly rejects:

> What God most High has decreed in eternity--that there shall be good for good and evil for evil—that decree will never change. For God most High is a wise God: how should He say, 'Do evil, that you may find good'? If a man sows wheat, shall he gather barley? Or if he sows barley, shall he gather wheat? That is impossible. All the saints and prophets have said that the recompense of good is good, and the recompense of evil, evil. Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, see it, and anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it (Zilzāl 99:7-8)."[35]

As we have noted, what God has predestined in eternity is, according to Rūmī, this fundamental and irreversible rule: good yields good and evil yields evil; the result of good is good and the outcome of evil is evil. In other words, good never generates evil, nor does evil, good. This is what Rūmī calls the original decree of God,[36] which is immune to change. On the other hand, the recompense for both good and evil, declares Rūmī, increases and decreases and hence changes. At whatever degree or quantity one may do well, one shall see it and re-

[35] Rūmī, *Discourses of Rumi(Fīhi mā Fīh),* trans. A.J. Arberry, p. 78.

[36] Rūmī, *Discourses of Rumi*, p. 78.

ceive it commensurate with the extent of that good. Likewise, the more wrong one does, the greater evil one will see in the end, as has been indicated in the Qur'anic verse quoted above. This being the case, a wicked man, as Rūmī further elaborates, may well become virtuous if he does some good; or a virtuous man may turn wicked if he does some evil.[37]

Now it is the appropriate time for us to turn our attention to the opposite of justice, i.e. injustice, and to investigate into its origins and causes. At the outset we should like to point out that injustice occurs in the world, according to Rūmī, as a result of man's own wrongdoing, which is in turn committed by him when he succumbs to the greed and temptations of his 'ego.' This conclusion is repeatedly underscored in numerous places of his *Mathnawi*, as well as in his other works. In his *Rubā'iyyāt*, he crystallizes his view on this matter as follows:

> *O (Divine) Justice! All sorts of injustices and wrongs are due to me (i.e. my ego). O ego! Thousands of sighs and complaints come about because of (I) ego. For God has stated in the Qur'an: "This is because of the (unrighteous deeds) which your hands sent on before you" (i.e. because of the unjust and unrighteous deeds that you have committed by your own hands). (Āl Imrān 3:182). O grieved! I (ego) am [like] a night from which springs forth the mother of all pain and sorrow. Much corruption and mischief have come about because of ego (I), though throughout my life my heart has always remained unhappy and discontent with it. I [seem to] seek justice and complain about injustice. But [in reality] it is I [or my ego] who is the root cause of all injustices and wrongs. Then it is ego that lies [as the cause] behind all my complaints and cries.*[38]

For the three eminent sages justice as a noun conveys very little about its in-depth meaning, which can only be understood through actions involving justice. Likewise, God's Justice cannot be well under-

[37] Rūmī, *Discourses of Rumi,* p. 79.

[38] Şefik Can, *Hz. Mevlana'nin Rubaileri,* 2/1642-1643. Rumi reiterates this view in several places of his *Mathnawi*, too. "Your self (*nafs*) is the mother of all idols: the material idol is a snake, but the spiritual idol is a dragon… From the self at every moment issues an act of deceit; and in each of those deceits a hundred Pharaohs and their hosts are drowned." 1/ 772 ff.

stood without first understanding His actions. Nevertheless, man may still fail to grasp it due to lack of his knowledge about God and His Names or because he could not have made sufficient observations and reflections on the signs of God.

At this juncture, it must be noted that these three mystics seem to suggest, though not explicitly, that justice has two sides, one looking to God and the other looking to man, both of which must be dealt with together in order to be accurately and correctly understood. There are actions that may appear to man as unjust, but in reality are right and appropriate actions in the eyes of God. The apparent existence or occurrence of injustice can be for the sake of justice, too. Since people generally value the appearance of actions, they tend to judge them at their face value, rather than as they are and what they are.

To substantiate this crucial distinction, both Al-Ghazālī and Rūmī offer two illuminating examples. Let us think, suggests Al-Ghazālī, of a king who has a storehouse full of arms, books, and variety of goods. He opens up his stores and distributes money to the wealthy and arms to scholars, and hands over the control of fortresses to scholars too, while giving books to the military personnel and granting the management of mosques and schools to the troops. Such a distribution, declares Ghazali, would definitely be beneficial to them, yet it would certainly be oppressive and a deviation from justice and such a king, therefore, would be certainly unjust, for a just king is always expected to put everything in its proper place. When the same king, on the other hand, harms the criminal by beating or punishment of death, his action then would be one of justice, as he is indeed putting a thing in its proper place. Or he harms the sick by forcing him to drink a medicine or applying to him a compulsory treatment. Though his action as such is harmful and hence unjust in appearance, it is ultimately good and beneficial because it is intended for healing the patient. Therefore, it would certainly be a just action in the end.[39]

[39] Al-Ghazālī, *The Ninety-Nine Names*, pp. 95-96.

As for Rūmī, he prefers to illustrate this incredibly complex matter with a fable of three animals: a wolf, a fox and a lion. One day the three of them, as Rūmī relates, had gone hunting for food for themselves in high mountains and deep wilderness. Although in the beginning the fierce lion was somewhat ashamed of going out with them, he honored them and gave them his company on the way. After a long search for a prey, they finally captured an ox, a goat and a fat hare in the mountains and brought them to the jungle where they wounded and killed them. Both the wolf and fox were well aware of the fact that the lion was the biggest and the most ferocious of all and hence they perceived him as a king. They also hoped that the prey would be divided 'according to the justice of emperors.' The lion, somehow sensing their ambitions and hopes, smiled at them. And turning to the wolf, he said, "O wolf, come and divide this prey! O old wolf, show with your example a new justice!" "O King," replied the wolf, "the wild ox is your share: he is big, and you are big, active and strong. The goat is mine, for it is middle and intermediate. O you, O fox, receive the hare, as it is just for you." Thereupon, the lion said, "O wolf, what have you said? Say, again! When I am here, how dare you speak and ask for a share?" The lion then at once tore off the head of the wolf and thus removed two-headedness. For him there could not be two heads in one place. Consequently, the lion turned to the fox and said, "Divide the prey so that we can eat." The fox, having first prostrated before the lion, said to him, "This fat ox will be your food at breakfast, O eminent King, and this goat will be reserved for the victorious King at noon, and the hare too is for supper –as the repast at nightfall of the gracious King." The lion then said, "O fox, you have indeed made justice shine forth: from who have you learnt to divide it in such a manner?" "O King of the world," answered the fox, "I learned it from the fate of the wolf." Thereupon, the lion said, "Since you have sacrificed yourself to love of me, you should pick all the three animals, and take them and leave."[40]

Needless to say, some of the commentators on the *Mathnawī* interpret this story in purely allegorical terms and thus indicate that

[40] See for the whole story, Rūmī, *Mathnawī* 1/3013-3123.

each of these animals has been thoughtfully chosen by Rūmī to symbolize one particular human faculty or, to put it more precisely, a mystic novice who has undertaken a spiritual journey towards God and who can advance on that journey better and faster provided that he is well aware of his weaknesses and in control of his lustful desires. The lion here stands for the spirit (*rūḥ*), the wolf for the soul (*nafs*), and the fox for the intellect (*'aql*). Each of them has its own respective faculties, such as the spiritual, the sensual, and the intellectual. This being the case, then, man can take his share from the justice of God provided that he establishes justice in himself and within his faculties by first liberating himself from the ambitions of his wolf-like carnal soul and relegating it to the service of his fox-like reason and then letting the latter, i.e. the reason, be guided and illuminated by his lion-like spirit. In other words, since the spirit belongs to the heavenly world, it governs the reason with heavenly knowledge, viz. revelation. As for the soul, since it is associated with the body, it may remain captivated by it unless it is delivered therefrom by the aid of divinely guided reason.[41] In this case, we can safely designate Rūmī's notion of justice as metaphorical, which, though less significant than it may seem, does have considerable bearing on physical justice as we will see shortly.

Al-Ghazālī likewise speaks of the importance of man's internal justice, which can in turn, be traced to Plato, who views justice, in his Republic, as a form of harmony among the faculties of the soul and injustice as disharmony, which prevents reasonable and effective action. Al-Ghazālī, like other Muslim thinkers before him, expounds at length on this description of Plato and declares that "justice consists in man's putting his passion and anger under the guidance of reason and religion."[42] If ever he does the opposite, he further asserts, and places reason at the service of passion, he will surely commit injustice. He

[41] The eminent commentator Isma'il Ankaravi, who affords a profound analysis of this allegorical story in his celebrated Commentary on the *Mathnawī,* is of the opinion that the story is susceptible of a variety of interpretations and moral lessons one of which has just been delineated. See for the details, his *Sharh-i Mathnawī,* vol. 1, p. 563 ff.

[42] Al-Ghazālī, *The Ninety-Nine Names*, p. 95.

extends such a conception of justice to the operation of a family and to society in both of which every member or citizen ought to fulfill his or her duty to the other members and citizens according to the parameters of the Law and in accordance with the place and position which he or she holds and occupies.[43]

Other commentators offer a somewhat different explanation of Rūmī's narrative. The lion, for them, represents the perfect master (*al-insān al-kāmil*) who is indispensable for the spiritual training of the mystic initiate, who in turn can duly benefit from the former if he purifies himself from all kinds of blemishes and evil thoughts and completely places himself at the service and under the guidance of his master, so much so that he sees himself as nothing in the presence of the latter and hence there remains no duality between the two.[44]

Be that as it may, this same story can be taken at face value and interpreted from the viewpoint of social distributive justice. As a matter of fact, we find a few subtle indications to this effect implied by Rūmī himself in the remainder of the story and in, as far as our research goes, one of the *Mathnawī* commentaries. Keeping in mind that almost every couplet of the *Mathnawī*, as the author himself remarks, intends to convey one or more moral lessons and exhortations, the present story, of course, aims to do the same thing but probably more subtly than some others. When we read again thoroughly and carefully the story in its entirety, we can derive a substantial number of moral messages from it. We shall nevertheless limit ourselves to those lessons which are pertinent to our topic.

One of the most significant messages the story intends to impart, apart from the metaphorical justice we have mentioned above, is that communal life (*jamā'a*) respected and shared by all the members of a society is, as the Prophet states, a mercy from God and that consultation (*shūrā*) is a prerequisite for the well-balanced operation of that collectivity, as the Qur'an commands it to the Prophet: Consult them

[43] Ibid.

[44] See for further Tahiru'l-Mevlevi, *Şerh-i Mesnevi,* Istanbul: Ahmed Said Matbaasi, 1966, vol. 5, p. 1411ff.

[in conducting the communal affairs].[45] In the story, by acquiescing to a joint venture together with the wolf and the fox, which both symbolize the ordinary men or soldiers of a community, the lion who represents the perfect man or the King of that community has shown the importance of collectivity in undertaking a formidable task, though he by himself could have done that task, i.e. capturing his prey even without the participation of the others. By joining them he has furthermore demonstrated not only his care and compassion for his subjects but his humbleness before them and thus set an exemplary behavior for them to emulate in their dealings with others. Most importantly, he has from the very outset acted responsibly and not at all selfishly. Likewise, a president or anyone who occupies a similar high ranking post must observe all of these much-needed standards of a healthy and balanced communal life: collectivity, consultation, care and compassion, responsibility, and humility.

The second most salient moral we can deduce from the story is concerned with the method and process of consultation, which we can, once again, discern from the initial behavior of the lion and his ensuing interesting conversation with the wolf. As we recall, the lion, right after capturing the prey, sought the opinion of the wolf as to its division among the three on the basis of what Rūmī calls a new justice (*ma'dalat ra nawkun*).[46] Thereupon the wolf proposed seemingly an equal and just division at least to his limited perception, not to mention his hasty and ambitious decision, and assigned each captured prey in commensurate with their respective sizes, namely the biggest share to the biggest animal, i.e. the ox to the lion, the intermediate share to the intermediate animal, i.e. the goat to the wolf, and the smallest share to the smallest animal, i.e. the hare to the fox. By such an apparently proportional division, the wolf had in fact committed several errors, even though the division might seem justifiable to him were justice to be taken in its most primitive and literalist sense, that of equality. First of all, the lion as the king of all and the most powerful animal in the jun-

[45] The Qur'an 3: 159; 42:38. Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, 1/ 3018-19.

[46] Rūmī, *Mathnawī* 1/3042.

gle had honored the wolf by seeking his opinion and in so doing he had also put him to the test to see how he would behave in the presence of his master. Even without asking him, the lion could very well have divided and distributed the prey according to his will. Besides, he had comparably more wisdom and experience than the wolf. But he nonetheless allowed the wolf to express his preference, since he firmly believed that consultation was an important principle to be observed in collective life. Thus the lion, by his appropriate behavior, did not only follow the principle of consultation but underlined as well its significance for his fellow animals, so that they might also practice it. In this case, what was expected of the wolf to first to show his gratitude to the lion for condescending to recognize their status and especially for honoring him by seeking consultation with him, and then to seek his opinion or simply consent to whatever and however he might decide. After all, the lion as the leader was well aware of their needs and conditions on the basis of which he would apply his justice to them. For in his wisdom justice consists not in equality or equity but in rendering to each one what is his due. By the same token, a responsible leader of any community would be expected to have sufficient knowledge about the needs and conditions of his own subjects and thus apply justice to them accordingly and distribute to each what belongs to him as his due and not according to their physical sizes. To express it in more concrete terms, a leader possessed of sufficient knowledge and wisdom, would give, for instance, to an engineer, who has acquired proficiency and authority in his field, more than what he would give to an unqualified laborer, even if the former works for far fewer hours than the latter does. In sum, justice, as Rūmī's allegorical narrative subtly implies, demands a distinction and recognition of several factors such as knowledge, training, age, qualifications, etc.

As for the method of consultation, it is to be sought, as the story teaches us, from those who are equipped with such desirable qualities and credentials as knowledge, wisdom, experience, etc. Because of this, Rūmī notes that the Prophet, though his own counsel is incomparably good, has still sought that of his companions, because God has commanded that he do so. Consultation itself no doubt constitutes one of

the essential requirements for the sound operation of any civilized polity. It is already a self-evident reality that in any civil society sound collective decisions can be best rendered after long deliberations and substantial consultations. But the efficiency of such deliberations and consultations is contingent upon the qualifications of those who take part in these processes. From this particular angle, the story furnishes at least two noteworthy principles; one is that a member of a consultative body should be equipped with knowledge and wisdom and the other, on which more stressed is laid than the former is that such a member must overcome his high ambitions and physical desires. Or to put it differently, he should not let his appetites and passions gain control of him and nor should they dominate and dictate his reason. In other words, before sitting on such an important advisory board and participating in the decision-making process, he should first establish equilibrium and justice within himself by removing from his heart such moral diseases as ambition, envy, selfishness and hatred. People who, like the wolf, are obsessed with high hopes and ambitions can neither carry out sound deliberations nor perform just divisions unless they first purify themselves of all internal obstacles. Besides, all of these harmful diseases and impediments, as we have noted earlier, can be traced back, according to Rūmī, to man's own internal enemy, ego. In this case, then, along with exterior conditions, man's interior state is extremely important not only in duly discharging his individual duties and responsibilities but in performing his social functions justly. For just acts, as he intimates, can proceed only from one whose life has come to personify justice.

In this specific context, it would be quite appropriate for us tackle, or better, wrestle with another crucial and persistently challenging metaphysical and ethical issue directly related to our subject: justice That is the subject of explaining the existence in the world of evil and suffering. How can God and His Justice allow such apparent evils to happen in the world, which He created, as the best possible of all existence? How to account for evil in a world created by an all-good and just God? Does God desire or will good for some and evil for others?

All our three thinkers appear to offer in their respective writings substantial arguments to justify the creation of evil by an absolutely Just, All-Generous and All-Merciful God. They have exerted genuine efforts in order to reconcile God's Divine Justice with the existence of evil. Obviously, they discuss the question of evil along with that of good, as the one would naturally presuppose the other. In their discussion of this exceedingly complex issue, each of them has approached it from his own distinct perspective and attempted to resolve it within the context of his own metaphysical and theosophical framework.

However, given the profundity of the question and its diverse ramifications and implications for fields ranging from ontology, theology and psychology, to ethics and politics and also because of the limited scope of this paper, we shall try to epitomize its most striking aspects as shared by the three thinkers. We should note at the outset that they all concur in the commonly-held view among Muslim philosophers that good and thus by extension justice are essential in the universe, while their respective opposites, evil and injustice, are accidental. They unanimously maintain that all creation is essentially good and that God's universal law, which is just par excellence, encompasses all things, corporeal and spiritual, terrestrial and celestial, worldly and heavenly alike. This being the case, then, all that we see as opposites--good and evil; justice and injustice—are in fact in a state of harmony in relation to God who plans, decrees and creates all things as they are and as they should be, and hence, with respect to God, all is fair and just. Furthermore, they all fit perfectly into the grand harmony existing in the whole universe. In accounting for the place of evil in the universe, Al-Ghazālī refers to the two most important names of God, *al-Raḥmān* (the Infinitely Good) and *al-Raḥīm* (the All-Merciful), both of which are mentioned most frequently in the Qur'an after the supreme name Allah. The mercy of God, he explains, is so perfect and so inclusive that it embraces both worlds, here as well as the hereafter and encompasses all, the deserving and undeserving, the needy and the wealthy. So God, who is utterly and truly merciful, Al-Ghazālī continues, does not desire affliction and suffering for His servants, even though He has the power to do so.

It is, on the other hand, a visible fact that the world is replete with diseases, calamities, disasters, tribulations, and many unnamed hardships, all of which can be called in some sense evil and all of which He could easily eliminate. There must then be some reason, rationale or justification for their existence and occurrence in the world. This, he declares, is for the sake of good itself, which would be meaningless and useless, if the former, i.e. evil, did not exist. In other words, "there is no evil in existence," indicates Al-Ghazālī, "which does not contain some good within it, and were that evil to be eliminated, the good within it would be nullified, and the final result would be an evil worse than the evil containing the good."[47]

He further delineates the reciprocal relation between good and evil with a concrete illustration. In order to preserve the health of one's whole body, he argues, one may reluctantly agree to the amputation of one's hand, which is apparently an evil in itself. In such an instance then we obviously observe someone committing an evident evil for the sake of the protection of his health, which is good. Since amputation of the hand as an apparent evil was intended and performed not for itself but for the sake of the body's health, it turned out to be good in the end. "What is intended for its own sake takes precedence over that which is intended for the sake of the other."[48] By the same token, God's mercy precedes His anger, as has been stated in the hadith. God's anger here, as Ghazali explains, is to be understood as 'His intending evil,' while His mercy is as 'His intending good.' That is to say, both intentions are truly His; however, He intends good for the good itself, whereas He intends evil not for evil itself but for some good, which is contained in that evil. It follows that although both good and evil are manifested according to divine decree, the former, i.e. good, is essential, while the latter, i.e. evil is accidental.[49]

To substantiate his view further, Al-Ghazālī provides us with another telling example of a far-sighted father and a shortsighted moth-

[47] Al-Ghazālī, *The Ninety-Nine Names*, p. 55.

[48] Ibid., p. 56.

[49] Ibid.

er, who both have shown concern for the health of their child, who must be cupped in order for him to recover. Because of her tenderness, the mother, says Al-Ghazālī, does not allow her child to undergo cupping, which, as she sees it, will undoubtedly hurt the child and which is therefore an apparent evil. As for the father, who is compassionate but at the same time intelligent, he foresees the ultimate good of cupping and thus forces upon the child. A little suffering as such, he concludes, is in fact the cause of a great joy for the child; and therefore, it is not evil but good. As compared to the mother's tenderness, the father's compassion is more complete.[50]

From all of these examples then we can deduce that, according to Al-Ghazālī, even if we cannot see and understand the possible reasons and causes of all the evils occurring in the universe, we should consider them either as potentially hidden good or as ultimately yielding to good. That is why towards the end of his discourse on God's Name the Infinitely Good, he critically compares the condition of those who cannot perceive such good behind evil, which in reality constitutes part of God's secrets, to that of the aforementioned boy who 'saw cupping as nothing but an evil.'[51] Both Ibn al-'Arabī and Rūmī concur with Al-Ghazālī on the primacy and essentiality of good in the universe, though they seem to exhibit subtle differences in the details of their explanations, especially when they contrast it with evil. Like Al-Ghazālī, they too explain the precedence of good over evil in conjunction with God's all-embracing mercy. Ibn Arabi goes even further and asserts that "the Wrath of God exists only by virtue of God's mercy on it." For the latter 'encompasses everything existentially and in principle.'[52] Ontologically speaking, since everything is brought into existence by and from the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*) and since the Real brings nothing into existence but the Real, there is in the final analysis only good (*al-khayr*), which is also Being. In other words, for Ibn al-'Arabī as for Al-Ghazālī and Rūmī, what is essential in the universe is good, which is in

[50] Al-Ghazālī, *The Ninety-Nine Names*, p. 56.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

one sense existence, whereas evil is the lack of good, which is therefore non-existence. God as the Real and the Being is all good, and this being so, nothing emerges from good but good. That is why the Prophet Muhammad, proclaims Ibn al-'Arabī, drew our attention to this fundamental fact when he appealed to God in his supplication: "All the good is in Your hands, while evil is not [or does not go] to You."[53] In saying so, the Prophet refrained from ascribing evil to God, which can be interpreted in three ways: first, evil is not an ontological quality. Otherwise, it would have a sort of existence on its own. Second, "all good is existence, while evil is non-existence."[54] Or to look at it from the opposite angle, existence in its entirety is good, because it is identical with the Sheer Good, who is God.[55] Third, evil may appear in good or occur to it only as an accident.[56]

In elaborating further on the pseudo-existence of evil, Ibn al-'Arabī offers fresh and profound insights into our subject, especially with his novel theory of God's dual commands, one creative (*al-amr al-takwīnī*), and the other, prescriptive (*al-amr al-taklīfī*). The essence of the former command lies in God's word 'Be' through which the whole universe comes into existence. Without any exception all created things necessarily obey this command, and therefore, when seen from this particular standpoint, there is no evil in existence. But when we take into consideration the second command, namely the prescriptive command, through which God reveals the Law and orders to human beings, 'Do this and refrain from that, or else you may fall into misery,' we find that some obey and some disobey. Consequently, people bring down either good or evil upon themselves depending on their obedience or disobedience to that Law.[57]

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[53] *Al-kahyr kulluhu fi yadayk wa'sh-sharr laysa ilayk.* See for the various versions of this ḥadīth, *Ṣaḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī, Anbiyā', 7, Riqaq, 46; *Ṣaḥīḥ* al-Muslim, Musāfirīn, 201, Ḥajj 19-21; *Sunan* Abū Dāwd, Manāsik, 26; *Sunan* al-Nasā'i, Iftitah, 17; *Sunan* Ibn Mājah, Manāsik, 15.

[54] Ibn al-'Arabī, *Futūḥāt,* III 373.26; *The Sufi Path of Knowledge,* p. 290.

[55] Ibn al-'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, III 528.6; *The Sufi Path of Knowledge,* p. 290

[56] Ibn al-'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, III 315.6; *The Sufi Path of Knowledge,* p. 291.

[57] Ibn al-'Arabī, *Futūḥāt* II 593.10; Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge,* p. 293.

As noticed, according to Ibn al-ʻArabī, with respect to God's creative command which brings the entire cosmos into existence, we cannot speak of evil at all, which in fact is committed by human beings themselves because of their failure to respect the requirements of the prescriptive command. In other words, the creative command of God cannot be disobeyed at all; on the contrary all the created beings, including all mankind follow it strictly. His prescriptive command, on the other hand, can be challenged and opposed by human beings, which results in what might be called 'evil.' Again, with respect to the creative command, there is no imperfection in the cosmos whatsoever, since all created beings follow what God commands them and desires for them. Besides, because God is absolutely perfect, He not only brought the universe into existence according to the most perfect mode possible, but gave every created thing its perfection. Rūmī shares most of what we have described about Al-Ghazālī's and Ibn al-ʻArabī's view of evil, to which he also adds substantial insights from his own perspective. Exactly like them, he proclaims that there is no absolute evil whatsoever in the world. Its existence is rather relative and for a purpose, for nothing God has created in this universe is in vain.[58] For instance, 'the snake's poison is life for the snake, but death for man.'[59] Since God is absolutely good, evil cannot in any way be ascribed to Him. However, things in the world, which God created to reveal His hidden treasure and knowledge,[60] are relatively good and evil either in terms of their proximity and remoteness to the source of all goodness, i.e. God, or in relation to human beings, as Rūmī himself articulates it in these couplets:

> *There is no absolute evil (bad-i muṭlaq) in the world: evil is relative. Recognize this fact.*
>
> *In the realm of Time there is nothing that is not a foot to one and a fetter to another.*

[58] Rūmī, *Mathnawi* 4/65; 6/2597.

[59] Rūmī, *Mathnawi* 4/68.

[60] Rūmī, *Mathnawi,* 2/994.

To one a foot, to another a fetter; to one a poison, to another sweet and wholesome as sugar.

Snake-venom is life to the snake, but death to man; the sea is a garden to sea-creatures, but to the creatures of earth a mortal would.

Zayd, though a single person, may be a devil to one and an angel to another:

If you wish him to be kind to you then look on him with a lover's eye.

Do not look on the Beautiful with your own eye: behold the Sought with the eye of the seeker.

Nay, borrow sight from Him: look on His face with His eye.

God has said, "Whose belongs to Me, I belong to him: I am his eye and his hand and his heat.

Everything loathly becomes lovely when it leads you to your Beloved.[61]

In discussing the pseudo-existence of evil in comparison with the real existence of good, Rūmī almost completely adopts the views of Al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-'Arabī as presented before him, and proclaims that although things appear to us as opposites, they all perform one task, which is unfolding God's Knowledge and manifesting His treasuries in the world.[62] Ordinary man, he maintains, continues to see things as opposites and fails to discern the unity beneath them until he changes his vision and looks at them with the eye of God. For in relation to God everything is good and perfect, but not so in relation to man. Theft, Rūmī offers by way of example, and unbelief are bad in relation to man, yet they are all good in relation to God. Or in the realm of a king there are robes of honor, wealth, estate, banquets, drums and banners as well as prisons, gallows, and executions. They are all there for the per-

[61] Rūmī, *Mathnawi,* 4/65-69, 71, 74-80; trans. R. A. Nicholson, *Rumi: Poet and Mystic,* Oxford: Oneworld, 1998, p. 152.

[62] Rūmī, *Discourses of Rumi,* p. 221.

fection of his kingdom; and hence, they are all good in relation to him and his realm.[63]

Because God has created the cosmos in order to let His hidden treasure be known, He would naturally will both good and evil, though He would approve of good only. Were He to approve of evil, argues Rūmī, He would not have commanded the good. This is comparable to the condition of a teacher who, in order to teach, desires the ignorance of his pupil. And he knows well that without such ignorance on the part of the pupil, there would be no teaching by the teacher. But as a teacher he does not approve of the pupil's ignorance. Or consider a physician who desires people to be ill in order to practice his profession, medicine and demonstrate his medical skills. In spite of such will and desire, he does not approve at all of the people's illness. Were he to approve of it, he would not have treated them.[64]

Thus Rūmī once again underscores the view of Al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-ʻArabī, that God does not desire will for the sake of will itself, but for the sake of good. Likewise, in spite of its various levels of manifestation in the cosmos, divine justice is in itself good and perfect and all-encompassing; and as such is the backbone of the harmony existing there. Man must participate in this harmony by first comprehending the all-pervasive just law of God, and then making himself by means of just actions a part of that harmony. If man can ever achieve such an outstanding metaphysical perception of the universe and the harmony therein, he will be able to discern that evil is in reality another dimension of universal good and justice. In fact, he will conceive it as a necessary part of God's all-encompassing justice. Once again, such a perception can only be attained if we look at things through the prism of divine justice, instead of the limited outlook of the human being, which is relative. In the meantime, we should point out that not only these three eminent Sufis but virtually all the metaphysicians of the Islamic tradition can be seen to have shifted and even inverted Protagoras' famous maxim that "man is the measure of all things," to assert the

[63] Ibid., pp. 42-43.

[64] See for more examples and details, Rūmī, *Discourses of Rumi,* pp. 186-189.

Qur'anic principle that "God is the measure of all things." However, since God cannot be personified, it more precisely formulated thus: God's Names and Acts as manifested on both macrocosm and microcosm, the universe and the human, are the measure of all things. We can stretch it further still and state by extension that His Justice is the measure of all things. The man of faith, as our three mystics unanimously warn, must not make any objection to God in His plan, decrees and actions. "For all of that is just: it is as it should be and how it should be."[65] All takes place, as Al-Ghazālī states, "by causes subservient to God and according to the highest standpoint and benevolence."[66] Besides, as the Qur'an clearly states, God gives each thing its [due and most appropriate] creation (Ṭā Hā 20:50), which means, as Ibn al-'Arabī explains, that He dispenses His treasures according to a prescribed measure in His name the Just.[67] Therefore, "when a person understands and verifies this verse, he has no way to plunge into meddling with God's wisdom in affairs."[68]

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[65] Al-Ghazālī, *The Ninety-Nine Names*, p. 96.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibn al-'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam,* ed. Abū al-'Alā 'Afīfī. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabī, 1946, p. 65; cf. *The Bezels of Wisdom,* trans. R.W.J. Austin. New York: Paulist Press, 1980, p. 68.

[68] Ibn al-'Arabī, *Futūḥāt* II 654.20; Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge,* p. 174.

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