

IN PURSUIT OF TRUTH: DJALĀL AL-DĪN RŪMĪ'S CONCEPTION OF HAPPINESS WITHIN THE *MATHNAWĪ-I MA'NAWĪ* HAKĪKATİN PEŞİNDE: CELĀLEDDİN RŪMĪ'NİN *MESNEVĪ-İ MĀNEVĪ*'DEKİ MUTLULUK ANLAYIŞI

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Abstract

This article investigates the notion of happiness as presented in Mawlānā Djalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's (d. 672/1273) *Mathnawī-ī Ma'navī*, examining the intersection amid the scholarly discourse on the subject within the Sufi literature. Rather than a momentary sentiment, Djalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's identifies happiness as the state of existence once experienced in the primordial realm. Having separated from the divine presence, the condition of human beings on earth would consist of pain and unhappiness. Since the worldly material is transitory, the happiness achieved through them is likewise. The analysis initiates with an exploration of the ephemeral nature of worldly objects. Rūmī suggests that true comprehension of the world's transient aspects lays the groundwork for spiritual elevation, emphasizing that material possessions offer limited and fleeting satisfaction, thus urging the seeker towards recognizing the impermanence of worldly gains. Advancing from the tangible to the introspective, the discussion underscores Rūmī's emphasis on self-awareness. Through the *Mathnawī*'s elaborate narratives and poetic reflections, Rūmī encourages the reader to embark on a path of spiritual enlightenment. Therefore, Rumi encourages the individual to take a voluntary spiritual journey (*sulūk*) from the self (*nafs*) to the soul aiming for divine union to achieve eternal happiness. This transformative journey, guided by a spiritual master, advances the seeker through various stages of self-awareness and purification, ultimately leading to a profound realization of one's divine essence and harmony with the divine will, which brings about a profound sense of genuine happiness. The study underscores Rūmī's pivotal role in shaping the discourse on happiness within Sufism and highlights the enduring relevance of his insights into the quest for authentic, enduring human contentment. This investigation enriches our understanding of Islamic and Sufi conceptions of happiness, positioning Rūmī's teachings as a vital link in the continuous pursuit of spiritual and existential fulfillment in contemporary times.

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Öz

Bu makalede Mevlânâ Celâleddin-i Rûmî'nin (ö. 672/1273) *Mesnevî-i Ma'nevî*'sinde ortaya koyduğu şekliyle mutluluk anlayışı incelenmiş ve tasavvuf literatüründe mutlulukla ilgili temel tartışmalara katkıları açısından değerlendirilmiştir. Rûmî'ye göre mutluluk, geçici bir duygu halinden ziyâde varoluşsal bir durumdur. İnsan gerçek mutluluğu henüz dünyâya gelmeden önce birlik (vahdet) âlemindeyken tecrübe etmiştir. Yeryüzüne yerleştikten sonraki ilâhî birlikten ayrılmanın acısını duyan insan hep o ilk mutluluk halini arar. Ancak dünyâ ve içindeki meta geçici olduğu için nesnelere yoluyla elde edilen mutluluk da muvakkattir. Rûmî, okuyucuyu dünyevî olanın cazibesinden sıyrılarak ilahi birliğe (*tevhîd*) eriştirecek mânevî bir yolculuğa dâvet eder (*seyrüsülûk*) ki *Mesnevî*, bu yolda ilerleyenlere rehberlik eden ve dolayısıyla mutluluğa eriştiren bir eserdir. Seyrüsülûk sırasında sâlik (*mürîd*), nesnelere doğası, kendi öz nefsi ve ilâhî varlığın hakikatine dair tecrübî bir bilgiye ulaşır ki bu üç bilgi türü *Mesnevî*'de mutluluğa eriştirici temel unsurlar olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Hakikat arayıcısı tasavvufi makamlardan geçerek nihayetinde *rızâ* mertebesine erişir ve bu noktada ilâhî irâde ile uyumlanarak kendi varlığında içkin ilâhî özle buluşur. Keşfi açılmış olarak eşyâda ve nefsinde Hakk'ın tecellilerini görmeye başlar. Böylelikle kişi (*sâlik*) bir zamanlar ilâhî birlik âleminde duyduğu mutluluğu bu dünya âleminde yeniden yaşama imkanı bulur. Rûmî *Mesnevî*'deki şiir dilinin anlam katmanları içinde, okurunu bu üç tür bilgiyle donanmış olarak otantik mutluluğa erişmeleri hususunda teşvik eder. Onun *Mesnevî-i Mânevî* bağlamında ortaya koyduğu mutluluk anlayışının temelinde Hak ve hakikat arayışı vardır. Gerçek mutluluk, hakikat arayışı içinde sülûkün zahmetlerini göze alarak manevî yolculuğa giren kişinin ulaştığı varoluşsal bir olgunluk tecrübesidir. Mevlânâ'nın mutluluk anlayışına odaklanan bu incelememiz, İslam ahlâk felsefesi ve tasavvuf literatüründe konuyla ilgili devam eden çalışmalara akademik bir katkı sunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Tasavvuf, Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî, *Mesnevî-i Mânevî*, Hakikat Arayışı, Mutluluk, Seyrüsülûk, Bilgi, Nefs, Mârifet.

Introduction

This exploration meticulously examines the conceptualization of happiness as articulated by Mawlânâ Djalâl al-Dîn Rûmî (d. 1273) within the sweeping verses of his magnum opus, the *Mathnawî-i Ma'nawî*. Distinguished by his seminal influence on the landscape of Islamic mysticism, Rûmî's exposition on happiness transcends mere ephemeral pleasures of earthly existence, advocating for a paradigm that harmoniously intertwines the immediacy of worldly experiences with the lofty realms of spiritual fulfillment. This analysis distinctly focuses on the *Mathnawî* to probe how Rumi adeptly interlaces quotidian knowledge with profound self-awareness and divine communion, thereby delineating a pathway towards a profound state of happiness. In Rumi's philosophical framework, happiness emerges not as a transitory

emotion but as a persistent state of equilibrium where the soul's deepest yearnings are in consonance with the divine essence (Öngören, 2004, 441-448). By anchoring this inquiry within the rich tapestry of Sufi intellectual tradition, this study illuminates facets of Rumi's thought that resonate profoundly with both modern and historical interpretations of spiritual endeavor, thereby enriching the discourse in Sufi scholarship.

Within the extensive discourse on happiness, scholarly examinations often oscillate between psychological interpretations and theological explorations. As an emotional state, the nature and characteristics of happiness have long been at the forefront of human contemplation across the domains of philosophy, ethics, and religious studies. This enduring inquiry has cultivated a substantial body of literature, offering diverse perspectives from various research disciplines, from economics to positive psychology (Gilbert, 2019, 27-54). Concurrently, there is a growing interest among modern scholars of Sufism in elucidating the genealogies of happiness within their tradition, thereby enriching the broader discourse in the social sciences and humanities. However, the integration of Sufi metaphysical perspectives with contemporary psychological insights remains noticeably scant, marking a significant lacuna that our study seeks to address.

Centered on Jalal al-Din Rumi's *Mathnawī-ī Ma' nawī* (Ceyhan, 2004, 325-334), this paper poses critical questions about the nature of happiness as understood within Sufi philosophical constructs and its broader implications for spiritual and psychological well-being. This investigation employs close textual readings and thematic analysis to explore the ethical and spiritual dimensions of the *Mathnawī*. Grounded in an analytical framework, it initially engages in a comprehensive exploration of the philosophical and historical dimensions of happiness, subsequently extending into an in-depth analysis of the pursuit of happiness within Sufi literature. The discussion further focuses on the *Mathnawī*, setting the stage for a detailed examination of how happiness is conceptualized and pursued through the intricate layers of Rumi's thought and within the rich context of Sufi intellectual tradition.

1. Happiness through the ages: a philosophical inquiry

Happiness is generally described as an emotional state stemming from desire, satisfaction, and the absence of pain, though its intensity can vary. (Cayne, 1992, 439; Cevizci, 2013, 1130; Hookway 2003, 74). What constitutes the characteristics and quality of happiness as an emotional state has been one of the central questions of humanity throughout history, whether in philosophy and ethics or religious sciences. In philosophical ethics, eudaimonia denotes happiness as the core purpose of human actions (Blackburn, 1996, 127; Akarsu, 1998, 129; Erk et al. 1018-19).

This contrasts with Aristippos' hedonistic pleasure principle (Gökberk, 2005, 51; Weber 1993, 91) and virtue ethicists' emphasis on balanced wellbeing, not to mention philosophers such Socrates (d. 399 B.C.), Plato (d. 347 B.C.) (Benn, 1908, 115; Morrison, 2001, 5-15; Yount, 2017, 55), and Aristotle (d. 322 B.C.) who associate happiness with innate potential and harmonious self-realization (35). This philosophical perspective venerates true happiness as a meticulously achieved

balance, a harmonious confluence between the material and the spiritual realms, realized through the sagacious governance of pleasures and the astute provision for needs while eschewing the pitfalls of excess. These philosophers, who ardently advocated for intellect and reason as the principal avenues to happiness, underscored the importance of systematically cultivating virtues. They also emphasized that engaging in rigorous rational inquiry into both the self and the cosmos is essential for realizing a life of fulfillment.

Within Islamic philosophy, prominent figures such as Ya‘qūb b. Ishāq al-Kindī, (d. 252/866) (55-56), Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 339/950) (211, 259) and Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037) (70-88) emphasize that true happiness arises from the confluence of acquiring and applying knowledge, with the latter suggesting its realization through the conjunction of human intellect to the *al-‘aql al-fā‘il* (active intellect), generally tying happiness to reasoned behaviour (Taş, 2006, 42-65; İbn Miskeveyh, 2009, 49-53; Mohd et al., 2021, 49-57). These philosophers indeed advocated for the use of intellect and reason as primary means to achieve happiness, aligning with the Aristotelian school’s emphasis on rational inquiry and ethical living as pathways to eudaimonia (wellbeing or happiness). Their works collectively underscore a philosophical tradition where happiness is closely linked to intellectual and moral development, reflecting a profound engagement with Aristotelian ethics.

A scholarly exploration into the philosophical narratives of Modern Era informed by the Enlightenment’s emphasis on reason and individual rights, reveals a pronounced emphasis on societal happiness, especially post-transition towards a modern state paradigm that promoted a utilitarian framework of happiness. This framework, predicated on maximizing well-being for the most significant number, finds its roots in the utilitarian ethos intertwined with Eudaemonism’s pursuit of happiness as the highest human good and the period marked by the Industrial Revolution, with its groundbreaking advancements in technology and communication, further accelerated this shift. Happiness, within this context, began to be invariably linked with the welfare state of both the individual and the collective, marking a significant deviation in the philosophical exploration of happiness (Ulal et al., 2020, 1018-1019; Kors, 2002; 5-19, Stove and Irvin, 2011, 15-27).

Owing to the prodigious volume of writings on happiness stretching back to ancient times, the abundant literature on this subject encompasses varied perspectives. Similarly, there has been an increasing interest among modern scholars of Sufism to put forward the genealogies of happiness in the Sufi tradition to contribute to the heightened discussions on this subject in social sciences and humanities (Seligman, 2004, 56; Layard, 2006, 11-28; McKenzie, 2016, 128-153). While some studies have examined Rumi’s thoughts within the framework of the discipline of Sufism using a more general approach, Öngören’s analysis distinctively captures the essence of Rumi’s Sufi philosophy, which emphasizes the transcendence of individual distinctions to realize a more profound unity with the divine. He poignantly summarizes this by quoting Rumi: “You say ‘I’, and He says ‘I’. Either you die, or he must die so that this duality does not remain” (Öngören, 2004, 445). This profound concept of self-annihilation not only underscores the central Sufi theme of ego dissolution but also illuminates Rumi’s portrayal of happiness as a state achieved

through merging with the divine essence, guiding our exploration of how ego dissolution in the verses of the *Mathnawī-ī Ma'nawī* serves as a pathway to existential happiness. Furthermore, existing studies (Asghari Mehr et al., 2022, 23-44.; Saleh and Badizadeh, 2021, 1-12; Ayvaz, 2018, 87-108; Yakıt, 1994, 29-73) have explored Rumi's contributions to philosophy and the concept of happiness through the lens of positive psychology. However, this work aims to delve deeper into Rumi's conceptualization of happiness within its original context—that of Sufi literature and thought, providing a more nuanced understanding of his spiritual and existential perspectives.

2. The pursuit of happiness in Sufi literature

Within the broader Islamic tradition, happiness is envisioned as both a temporal and eternal pursuit. In this milieu, the pursuit engenders a serenity and divine contentment that transcends worldly entanglements, epitomizing a detachment that Prophet Muhammad personified—residing within society while remaining unaffected by its material temptations. This approach expresses happiness as a tangible state of existence rather than an abstract notion or a momentary pleasure.

In the canon of Sufi literature, happiness originates from experiences that are both spiritual and deeply introspective, characterized by a profound serenity and divine closeness (al-Sarrāj, 1914; al-Qushayrī, 1989; al-Makkī, 1982). The notion is broadly defined as a state of relief, encompassing joy, expansion (*bast*) comes through witnessing the divine manifestation, intimacy (*'uns*), and fellowship, all deeply rooted in spiritual and moral pleasure, as supported by seminal works in the Sufi tradition (al-Kalābādhī, 2019, 269-311; al-Makkī, 1982, 109; al-Hudjwīrī, 2018, 434). Happiness in this context is mostly acknowledged as expansion (*bast*), “a sense of joy and exaltation vouchsafed to the mystic by God”. Having been subjected to the divine name of the Expander (*al-Bāsit*), the seeker feels liberation from any material concerns and experiences genuine happiness and contentment.

Sufism presents a profound approach to peace and harmony, depicting happiness as a concrete reality in Islamic spirituality. This paradigm reveals happiness as a state of divine bliss, freeing individuals from the binds of material desires and ushering in the sense of both earthly and heavenly fulfillment, deeply rooted in the eschatological aspects of human existence (Daiber, 2023; Çağrıç, 2008, 319-322; Nasr, 2014, 76-91). Sufism promotes this emancipation through spiritual education (*sülük*), highlighting heart purification and divine union, mostly facilitated by remembrance (*dhikr*) and ascetic implications (*riyadah*). This methodology, differentiating itself from the philosophical paths, advocates experiential knowledge as a pathway to genuine contentment (*ridā*). Central to this discourse is the work of Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) (13), whose *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* emphasizes happiness through *ma'rifa*—a profound understanding of Allah, a concept further expanded by Rumi (Gazzālī, 2002, 15-25). This alignment of ultimate happiness with divine comprehension serves as a cornerstone in Sufi literature, inviting a deepened exploration in Rumi's *Mathnawī*. As the focus shifts from a general survey of happiness in the mystical thought of Sufism to the particular expressions in Rumi's work, it becomes evident that happiness is a pervasive and essential theme.

3. Happiness in Jalal al-Din Rumi's *Mathnawī-ī Ma'nawī*

Although no single autonomous work by Rumi focuses solely on the concept, almost all his work touches on the issues that contribute to and constitute human happiness. Rumi applies the words *neshât* (نشاط), *sorour* (سرور), *shadī* (شادی), *sarmasti* (سرمنستی), *khosh* (خوش), *khosh deli* (خوش دلی), *tarab* (طرب) to explain the state of human happiness in general. These terms, reflecting different facets of joy, set the stage for a deeper exploration into the dualities of human experience. Moving to the foundational verses of the *Mathnawī*, our analysis begins with Rumi's poignant exploration of separation and loss as gateways to understanding human joy and suffering. Our attention is directed to the initial verses, wherein Rumi elucidates the pain of separation from a state of being together (*wiṣāl*): "Listen to this reed flute as it tells its tales; Complaining of separations as it wails" (Rumi, 1925, I: 1). Having focused on the allegorical tale of the venerated reed instrument, the *ney*, in this *Spiritual Couplets*, Rumi succinctly expresses the fundamental roots of human suffering. We learn that *ney* used to inhabit a marshy reedbed before it was cut and made into an instrument. It was blissfully living in a reed paradise. However, it was uprooted and forced to leave its beloved marsh, which caused it great pain. It was hollowed out, pierced with holes, baked in a furnace, and then molded into the shape of a *ney*, ultimately severed from itself (*nafs*, ego). Granted a new life with the breath blown by its owner, the *ney*, with its mournful sound (*nafas*) and moving melodies, began to sing of its longing for the marshes, its former home, and the joy it felt while living therein.

In this allegorical narrative, Rumi recounts the journey of humankind from a state of Oneness (*waḥda*) into the physical realm of multiplicity, illustrating our detachment from the divine unity and subsequent immersion into a world of many. While the *ney* represents humanity, the reedbed symbolizes the spiritual realm in which humans exist in union with God and, therefore, can eventually attain direct and unhindered knowledge of Him. According to the poet, the essence of humanity is rooted in joy due to its union with the Divine Being. However, after embarking on a downward arc from the Divine realm, traversing through the elemental stages of fire, air, water, and earth, one finds oneself as a human in the physical realm—the terrestrial sphere of existence—losing sight of one's true essence. According to Rumi's philosophical exposition, every human being within this phenomenal world, whether with or without conscious realization, carries a profound longing for a transcendent realm within them. This awakening moment is the metaphysical domain of Divine Unity (*tawḥīd*), as illuminated in the initial passages of his *Mathnawī* (Rumi, 1925, I: 1-18). This yearning is alluded to by the term *bazm-i alast* a reference to the Sufi concept signifying a primordial covenant. This phrase, rich in spiritual connotation, finds its origin in the sacred Qur'ānic expression "Am I not your lord (*alastu bi rabbikum*)?" (*Qur'ān*, 7: 172) underscoring the eternal bond between the Divine and the human soul. This connection calls humanity towards its celestial origin.

According to Rumi, humans are then intrinsically in pursuit of the abstract bliss previously experienced in that plane, much like *the nay* yearning for its reedbed

(Cebecioğlu, 2014, 80; Yavuz, 1992, 106-108; Türer, 2003, 143). He believes all suffering arises from forgetting one's divine origins. At the same time, true happiness lies in recognizing and connecting with the Divine essence through a deliberate and mindful spiritual journey, denoted in the Sufi lexicon as *sayr wa sulūk*, or merely *sulūk* (Uludağ, 2010, 127-128). This path, imbued with intentional awareness, unveils the knowledge of objects, the self, and God, guiding individuals toward genuine contentment in both worlds. As the initial step towards celestial bliss, understanding the essence of worldly objects is paramount for spiritual aspirants.

3.1. Knowledge of the nature of objects

According to Rumi, the initial phase of a person's spiritual journey through life, or the deliberate pursuit of spiritual *growth*, called *sulūk*, involves a necessary interaction between humans and objects. This unavoidable engagement with objects, or shay, is the first enlightening experience an individual has when transitioning from the unseen celestial realm (*ālam al-ghaib*) to the seen physical realm (*ālam al-shahāda*)— a process through which knowledge is acquired (Kutluer, 2010, 34-36). In numerous verses and allegorical tales of the *Mathnawī*, the poet highlights the stressful circumstances induced by the compulsory interaction with objects. He underscores the necessity of acknowledging objects' transient, mutable, and relative nature to surmount these tragic situations, which surpasses the mere desire for possessions like wealth and status and the subsequent dependency that arises. Essentially, the *Mathnawī* posits that everyone interacting with objects in the world of multiplicity (*kathrah*) will, at some point, whether through pleasant or bitter experiences, realize that objects do not lead to eternal happiness; instead, they are ephemeral and fleeting.

Indeed, Rumi presents human interaction with material objects as an initial but incomplete attempt to find meaning and happiness. He asserts that humans, from birth, are bound by physical needs and spend much of their lives trying to satisfy these evolving desires. In each phase of an individual's spiritual journey, their relationship with material objects undergoes a unique transformation. Eventually, this relationship reaches a pinnacle where people find themselves accumulating unnecessary possessions and experiencing a growing desire for more. Echoing the Sufi traditions that de-emphasize worldly attachments, Rumi challenges us with the question, "How long will you be a slave to gold and silver?" (Rumi, 1925, I: 19). This material focus diverts individuals from their divine origins and fosters unhappiness, consistent with Qur'ānic views on the ephemeral nature of worldly gains (Rumi, 1930, III: 185). To find balance in both the material and spiritual realms, Rumi advises recalibrating one's relationship with possessions. This concept aligns with Islamic teachings on balanced living (*i'tidāl*) (Çağrıncı, 2001, 456). This state of balance, which necessitates an acknowledgment of the ephemeral character of worldly objects, is a realization typically embraced at the commencement of the Sufi path.

If we are to take another look at the poet's suggested solution, the knowledge that objects, by their very nature, are transient becomes the critical insight that allows man to check his desires. In this context, the individual aware that everything is transient will cease in his endless pursuit of material goods. He will refrain from basing their happiness on possessions and be safeguarded primarily from events and episodes that

could otherwise prove distressing. For Rumi, the allure of material goods stems from the deep desire for them (Kutluer, 2010, 34-36). However, once the desired object is obtained, the situation changes. One of the central subjects in Sufi literature and Rumi's poetry is that the initial attraction towards a desired object often fades after it is acquired, revealing its true nature.

The narrative of a groom discovering his bride to be an elderly widow upon makeup removal serves as a metaphor for the disenchantment often experienced after acquiring material possessions, highlighting the superficiality and transience of material allure (Rumi, 1934, VI: 311-321). In the *Mathnawī*, Rumi shares a touching story about a groom who, lured by the visible signs of makeup, mistakenly believed he was marrying a young and attractive woman. Nevertheless, on the wedding night, he uncovered that the woman he married was an aged widow disguised with cosmetics—which plunged him into despair (Rumi, 1934, V: 426-429). This narrative underscores the human tendency to be misled by superficial appearances, a theme Rumi elaborates with cautionary wisdom in another verse, “Since you are attached to those, oh, beware! How often will you sob piteously in repentance! The titles of prince, vizier, and sultan may be enticing but hidden beneath them are death, pain, and turmoil” (Rumi, 1934, VI: 352). This illustrates the imperative of vigilance towards the fleeting allure of worldly riches and bounties, likening them to sweet dishes whose pleasurable taste is merely ephemeral, a momentary sensation masking the inherent transience of material delights. Regrettably, the ephemeral joy of such desserts ultimately culminates in the decline of physical health and the onset of spiritual maladies (Rumi, 1934, V: 2064-2065).

Rumi's teachings in the *Mathnawī* equate pursuing material wealth to “drinking salty water” (Rumi, 1925, II: 1118-119)—a cycle that fails to satiate man's innate longing for the eternal, perpetuating an unquenchable thirst instead (Chittick, 2013, 282). According to Rumi, as can be gleaned from Sufi traditions, the quest for material affluence can become dreadful, necessitating a balanced approach for genuine contentment. Drawing inspiration from Sufi traditions, Rumi elucidates a sophisticated understanding of the interconnection between material possessions and true contentment, drawing inspiration from Sufi traditions. He contends that a fundamental aspect of material objects is the associated cost, which surpasses monetary value and impacts emotional, spiritual, and, potentially, physical well-being. This cost can divert one's focus from their spiritual journey and ultimate fulfillment. Thus, to preserve equilibrium, it is essential to moderate the relentless pursuit of material acquisitions, thereby facilitating a closer connection to one's spiritual essence. This state can be attained through contemplative reflection on the challenges involved in acquiring and preserving material wealth. Engaging in such reflection helps temper the desire for more and fosters a sense of appreciation for what one already possesses (Rumi, 1961, 166).

Building on this theme of appreciation, Rumi identifies gratitude as the key to happiness. He teaches that recognizing and valuing our current blessings can effectively counteract the allure of the material world. This principle is vividly illustrated in the *Mathnawī* through the story of a donkey who envies well-appointed Arab horses (Rumi, 1934, V: 2380-2381). In Rumi's narrative, the donkey, initially

envious of Arab horses lavishly housed in a grand stable, witnesses their return from battle severely wounded and comprehends the severe consequences of their seeming advantages. This epiphany compels the donkey to embrace its humble yet secure life, declaring, “O Lord, I am content with my simple existence; the true cost of those luxuries is too overwhelming” (Rumi, 1934, VI: 316-334). This symbolic story discloses the veiled difficulties accompanying prosperity and well-being, encouraging a balanced living that values conveniences without yielding to ceaseless cravings and, thus, misery. He emphasizes that temporal indulgences frequently involve inherent suffering, and genuine well-being is most effectively realized through a state of balance and harmony. Opting to promote the merits of asceticism, he endorses a refined understanding of the two-fold nature of the objects: they might either improve living or become encumbrances. This approach, by nature, pivots into his central discourse on the subject: the subjectivity/relativity of the matter.

When exploring the nature of the matter in the *Mathnawī*, Rumi underlines its inherent substitutability—a crucial perspective influencing happiness, particularly during bereavement, claiming that material loss, as painful as at the time, can be a stimulus for awakening and transformation (Rumi, 1930, III: 1255-1258). He offers a complementary basis for interpreting life’s challenges as openings to reconnect one’s “inner jewel” or the divine essence inherent in human nature. This viewpoint enlightens the replaceability of material possessions and their replaceability (Rumi, 1934, IV: 1654-1656), which leads to an important insight: the temporality of material objects summons a quest for the everlasting, abstract, and fundamental. Armed with this wakefulness, one might contemplate the contentment that originated from filling the gap with perpetual elements—ethics, values, and beauty of the abstract (Rumi, 1925, II: 2130-2135). Rumi asserts that amid all intangible things that one might aspire, the love of the Truth (*al-Ḥaqq*) is the most appealing and gratifying (Rumi, 1934, VI: 3602-3604). This transformational perspective is not just a remedy for individual setbacks but also a courier for steering the complexities of human existence.

In various couplets of *the Mathnawī*, Rumi explores the other core characteristics of the objects: The critical role of subjectivity in the human assessments of both possessions and life experiences (Rumi, 1930, III: 1259-1269). This subjectivity is not purely a psychological incident but spiritual apprehension with the latent to angle one’s opinion of the world. It commonly arises from the *nafs* (*self*), which is to assess the worth of the fundamental essence of an object established on its effectiveness for one’s desires and expectations. In this process, the individual fails to acknowledge the intrinsic nature of things, opting instead for a utilitarian and egocentric assessment (Rifâi, 2000, 454; Cevizci, 2017, 455-456). This leads us to another dimension of Rumi’s philosophy—his notion of unity or “the essence of certainty” (*‘ayn al-yaqīn*) (Rumi, 1925, II: 2345-2348; III: 3103). Rumi contends that the typical human practice of interpreting the nature of objects as either good or bad based on personal utility is fundamentally misguided. Such evaluations remain entrenched in relativity and fall short of attaining a higher level of comprehension. As articulated in the *Mathnawī*, all perceived distinctions, even those regarded as opposites like good and evil, ultimately

coalesce into a singular unity from a divine standpoint—what is referred to in Sufi terminology as the unity of all existence (*wujūd*) (Rumi, 1925, I: 500-520).

Accordingly, within the human experiential domain, such constructs as good and evil are subject to interpretative relativism and ultimately coalesce into a monistic essence when apprehended through the divine perspective. Drawing from the Qur'ān's implication (Rumi, 1925, II: 216) that perceptions can be deceptive in evaluating good and evil, Rumi, in the *Mathnawī*, underscores the subjectivity of material perceptions. He contends that superficial judgments often lead to profound misinterpretations and existential discontent. Rumi eloquently illustrates the dichotomy between perception and underlying reality, noting, “[e]ven if you do not wish for your nose to bleed, it still does, yet such bleeding [somehow] serves your health” (Rumi, 1930, III: 3416). At a cursory glance, a nosebleed may be perceived as detrimental. Medical professionals often recognize it as a body's adaptive response to potential threats. The seeming discomfort can be understood as an underlying benefit if one steps back from immediate emotional reactions. The poet highlights analogous examples from daily life: the curative properties of bitter medicine or the seemingly harsh winter's essential role in soil regeneration, underscoring the importance of perspective in determining value. Storytelling within the *Mathnawī* elegantly expresses the concept that events, which may initially appear negative within the universe, possess the potential to yield considerable advantages for personal development (Rumi, 1934, IV: 105-108).

Indeed, in the context of Rumi's metaphysical exploration, material perceptions are subjective judgments, thus showing a lack of accuracy compared to their original substance as known by God himself. Despite their apparent distinctions, the essence of all beings is akin to visualizing individual containers filled with water: when the containers shatter, the essence within—much like the water—reveals its singular, undivided nature. Drawing from this spiritual metaphor and the Qur'ānic understanding that perceptions can often be misleading, Rumi cautions against the dangers of shallow judgments, which can result in misinterpretations and a deep sense of existential unrest. In Rumi's discourse, understanding objects fully necessitates profound self-awareness, achieved through the intentional spiritual journey of *sulūk* in Sufi traditions. Recognizing an object's intrinsic essence surpasses mere intellectual pursuit; it is a transformative path where the seeker encounters Divine foundations, fostering heightened ontological awareness and, thus, happiness.

At its core, the *Mathnawī* underscores that all individuals interacting with objects in the phenomenal world (*shahāda*) (Çelebi, 2010, 422-3) will, in time, through experiences—be they joyous or grievous—realize that objects do not pave the way to eternal bliss; they are transient, ephemeral, and interchangeable, and judgments about them are subjective. However, one who consciously sets out on the spiritual journey, upholding a mindful and watchful demeanor while gaining insight into one's self and the origins of human nature, stands a greater chance of achieving celestial happiness within the earthly domain.

3.2. Knowledge on humankind: Self-awareness

In alignment with Islamic tradition, Rumi extols the human being as God's vicegerent (*khalīfah*) and servant (*'abd*) on earth, endowed with discernment and infused with a divine spirit, elevating them to the pinnacle of creation as the noblest of creatures (*Qur'ān*, 17:70; Kutluer, 2000, 320-3). Yet, as introduced in the opening verses of the *Mathnawī*, human vulnerabilities like forgetfulness, ignorance, and mainly succumbing to malevolence can demote them to the nadir of creation, encapsulated by the Qur'ānic term, the lowest of the low (*asfal al-sāfilīn*) (*Qur'ān*, 95:5). Those who act impulsively, squandering their time and the trust entrusted to them on trivial pursuits, will discover, as Rumi cautions, "And if the demon takes the seal off thy hand, thy kingdom is past, and thy fortune is dead" (Rumi, 1925, I: 3581), that such actions preclude them from attaining true happiness (Rumi, 1930, III: 3298-3300).

Rumi elucidates humanity's deviation from divine roots in his illustrative tales, portraying individuals ensnared in misdeeds and ephemeral pleasures. He accentuates the unawareness of our divine essence by using metaphors, such as golden utensils for plain meals or divine swords as zucchini hangers (Rumi, 1985, 27). Rumi pronounces the human condition at the intersection of intellect, soul (*rūh*), and ego (*nafs*), emphasizing the supremacy of fleeting desires over spiritual profundity. *The Mathnawī*, abundant with allegories, vehemently upholds the sanctity of human existence. Rumi, articulating a profound understanding of life's purpose, contends that it transcends mere engagement in worldly endeavors; instead, it involves harnessing the earthly creations as means in our divine odyssey. Reflecting on this, he philosophizes in his *Spiritual Couplets*:

"O, thou who art the whole sea, what wilt thou do with dew? And O thou who art the whole of existence, why are thou seeking non-existence? O resplendent Moon, what wilt thou do with the dust, O thou beside whose face the Moon is pallid? Thou art lovely and beautiful and the mine (source) of every loveliness: why shouldst you lay thyself under obligations to wine? The tiara of We have honored (the sons of Adam) is on the crown of thy head; the collar of We have given thee hangs on thy breast" (Rumi, 1934, V: 3571-3574).

The verse above underscores the possibility for individuals to achieve true contentment by acknowledging their inherent divinity. Such happiness extends beyond a mere understanding of life's transient nature; it demands deep self-awareness and a recognition of humanity's celestial roots (Rumi, 1925, II: 1215-1220). While mere intellect is inadequate to comprehend the world's essence and our intrinsic divinity truly, and insufficient to guide righteous actions based on such understanding, Rumi contends that only through a spiritual journey (*sulūk*) complemented by self-discipline (*riyāḍah*) can one truly grasp and align with this profound wisdom — a journey from self to the Divine.

In Rumi's evocative narrative, the pain of humanity's alienation from its Divine origins is meticulously unraveled, peaking with the profound plea, "O son, burst thy chains and be free! How long wilt thou be a bondsman...?" (Rumi, 1925, I:19). This plea prompts Rumi to guide the reader through a metamorphic journey, depicted through the story of a Sultan enchanted by a concubine, a narrative encapsulating the

strenuous endeavor to overcome the *nafs* (*self, ego*), which is an obstacle that prevents the soul from re-establishing its bond with the Divine. The narrative progresses as the Sultan, beguiled by a country girl, captures her and relocates her to his palace, unaware of her existing fondness for a jeweler from a remote city. This devotion triggers an ailment resistant to the treatments of the Sultan's doctors. In desperation, the Sultan seeks divine assistance, resulting in the appearance of a heavenly physician. This exalted figure, equipped with penetrating insight, identifies the girl's affliction, and recommends a reunion with the jeweler, a solution that astonishingly rejuvenates her. However, as the Sultan's impatience and doubt escalate, a test devised by the divine physician ensues. A potion that transforms the jeweler into a grotesque figure elicits the girl's revulsion, resulting in his expulsion from the palace. Freed from her ephemeral infatuation, the girl's wellbeing thrives, culminating in a durable, gratifying union with the Sultan (Rumi, 1925, I: 33-95).

The narrative serves as an allegorical exploration of the confrontation with the *nafs*. The Sultan symbolizes the seeker, the girl represents worldly desires, the jeweler signifies fleeting attractions, and the physicians represent the partial intellect. Ultimately, the divine physician, embodying the perfect man (*al-insān al-kāmil*) or Sufi master (*murshid*), orchestrates the triumph over the ego (*nafs*) and the reconnection with the inner soul (Aydın, 2000, 330-331). The narrative underscores that genuine happiness is derived from acknowledging and surmounting the *nafs*, having encumbered a spiritual journey facilitated by the guidance of the murshid on the path of God. The entire narrative portrays the human soul's journey as it returns to its original state, serving as a potent representation of the soul's reunion with the Divine and the subsequent everlasting happiness.

Rumi's approach in *the Mathnawī* underscores the necessity of knowing objects, the self, and God to meaningfully undertake life's journey on earth. The text is filled with symbolic expressions and narratives, which predominantly mirror the dervish's sequential journey of enlightenment or knowledge acquisition in these realms. An individual's initial phase is one of knowledge acquisition, resulting from interaction with objects and, more often than not, challenging experiences (Rumi, 2000, 1-1255-1355; 2: 1603-1614; 3: 538-55; 4:3345-50; 5: 730-45; 6: 1113-25). If individuals lack the desire to go beyond the physical world, they often end up living their lives in ignorance, without understanding themselves or having spiritual wisdom. As a result, they fail to experience the deep happiness, or bliss, that comes from reconnecting with their fundamental essence. However, if life experiences guide one towards their innate nature, and they willingly engage in the spiritual journey (*sulūk*), they can, through disciplined practice, surpass the layers of the self (*nafs*), experience the state of annihilation (*fanā'*), and ultimately, merge with the innermost pure soul, or the divine core.

As Rumi articulates, *sulūk* is to set foot amid the ocean of meaning (Rumi, 2000, I: 571). This transformative odyssey is analogous to recuperating from a profound affliction, as delineated in the *Mathnawī*; he illustrates the process as a transition from the bitterness of ailment, symbolized by carnal desires, to the sweetness of wellbeing, represented by the Divine's compassionate reign over a heart cleansed and restored (Rumi, 2000, I: 3664-65). *The Mathnawī* is viewed by many as a significant guide,

leading individuals from the limitations of the self towards the expansive divine. Its 25,000 couplets chronicle the spiritual journey of dervishes under a *murshid*'s guidance, echoing Prophet Ibrahim's shift from celestial wonder to divine insight (Rumi, 2000, II: 3077). It suggests that life's tapestry of trials and revelations steers us toward our inherent virtues and divine union. As seekers systematically strip away the layers of the *nafs* through meticulous self-examination and spiritually grounded practices, they uncover the *nafs*, reaching a state of annihilation (*fanā'*) and reconnection with the inner soul (*rūh*). This process sets the stage for the journey Rumi delineates, starting with sincere repentance (*tawbah*) (Rumi, 2000 I: 835; II: 1269) and disciplined asceticism (*riyāḍah*) (Rumi, 2000, I: 3458; II: 1446), which demands a relinquishment of worldly desires and moderation in all aspects of life.

In the quest for self-mastery outlined in his *Mathnawī*, Rumi highlights the imperative of fostering resilience, discipline, and dhikr as vital tools to subjugate worldly desires, eschew transient joys, and attain enduring fulfillment and inner tranquility, thereby encouraging individuals to tap into their inherent faculties and virtues to align with their divine essence and overcome despair. This disciplined approach, encapsulated in Rumi's verse "O gift of God the Truth and defense from grief/Meaning of patience is the key to relief" (Rumi, 2000, I: 2908), sets the foundation for the subsequent stages of gratitude (*shukūr*), reliance (*tawakkul*), contentment (*riḍā*) (Rumi, 2000, III: 991; V: 2425; IV: 1753). The spiritual journey which mandates a disciplined mastery over the ego (*nafs*), propelling the seeker towards a deliberate detachment from transient worldly desires (Rūmī, 2000, I: 230; VI: 599; V: 282). For Rūmī, human existence is not confined to the pursuit of transient matters. Humans are cautioned against becoming ensnared by the material world, which, though created for their use, should not dominate them. Instead, on the journey towards the Divine, there is an imperative to transform these earthly objects into tools for spiritual advancement. Rūmī articulates this in the *Mathnawī*, questioning the preoccupation with the ephemeral when one is part of a grander existence, urging a focus on inherent beauty and divine gifts rather than external, fleeting pleasures. This endeavor necessitates a confrontation with primal urges, a process that, despite its initial difficulties, serves as a pivotal means for unveiling one's true nature beneath the superficial layers of the *nafs*—namely, the divine essence inherent in every individual. The enlightenment derived from the purification of the *nafs* (*tazkiya*), or the wisdom acquired through spiritual education, propels one towards realizing their divine potential, thereby fostering a commitment to virtuous actions and dedicated effort, contributing significantly to personal wellbeing (Rūmī, 2000, II: 353, 421).

Through such disciplined engagement, individuals transcend their baser selves, achieving alignment with the Divine essence—a journey culminating in contentment (*riḍā*), epitomized by a profound joy that celebrates closeness to the Divine. This stage, where one's individual and selfish desires have become rendered through spiritual education, is also respected as the annihilation of ego, as it is referred in Sufi terminology, self-annihilation or "non-being" in the presence of His Being (*fanā'*) (Rumi, 1925-1934, I: 518; VI: 241-242).

3.3. Divine knowledge: Ma'rifa

Delving into the spiritual depths of Rumi's *Mathnawī*, divine knowledge—or ma'rifa—emerges not merely as a concept but as the quintessential pathway to authentic happiness. Rumi elucidates this profound realization of one's existence, which is achieved through mystical union with the Divine, as the core of spiritual enlightenment. This journey towards self-realization and true contentment is meticulously outlined, revealing the transformative power of transcending egoistic desires to achieve divine union. The foundation of this spiritual voyage is the discipline of the ego (*nafs*), where the seeker embarks on an educational process of self-annihilation or “non-being” in the divine presence, a concept known as *fanā* in Sufi terminology. Rumi delineates this spiritual progression as a threefold journey: it begins with the renunciation of negative traits, advances through the abandonment of personal gratification from worship, and culminates in a profound immersion into God's divine light, which ushers in a continuous state of awe in the presence of ultimate Reality, the Truth (*al-Haqq*) (Hirtenstein, 2024; Demirci, 1997, 178-179).

Central to Rumi's discourse is the notion that real happiness flows from divine knowledge—*kashf*, or the unveiling of the mysteries concealed behind the material veil. This knowledge transcends intellectual and sensory limits and allows for a direct encounter with the Divine, marking a significant shift from worldly pursuits to a deeper, spiritual existence. Such enlightenment, Rumi argues, not only brings about a state of happiness (*riḍā*) but also fosters profound gratitude and satisfaction with one's divine gifts. In lexicography, *kashf* denotes the act of unveiling or removing a cover, disclosing something concealed, or gaining insight into something existent yet of unknown quality (Gardet, 2024). The Qur'ān and its derivatives employ this term to signify “the alleviation of tribulation and the termination of desperation.” Sufi terminology connotes the path of directly apprehending knowledge in matters of divinity where intellect and sensory perception prove inadequate. Rumi elucidates this in the *Mathnawī*, saying, “Kashf (This circular (issued by Love) made the spirit crazy to find (both) the Opener [*al-Fattah*] and that which is opened (by Him)” (Rumi, 1934, VI: 4051). This proclamation underscores the profundity of unveiling as not merely a passive reception of divine illumination but as an active, impassioned pursuit of both the Opener and the opened, signifying the essence of divinity and the mysteries it unfolds (Uludağ, 2002, 315-317).

In the spiritual cartography charted by Rumi in his *Mathnawī*, the quest for divine knowledge unfurls as a journey toward *tajallī*, or self-disclosure, wherein the Divine Reality becomes manifestly present within the seeker's own being. This attainment of *tajallī* unlocks a profound mystery: the capacity to perceive the cosmos through divine eyes, recognizing the immanence of the Divine in every facet of creation. Such a state heralds a profound reacquaintance with the Divine, marking a significant re-encounter with the Creator.

The stations of spiritual growth—encompassing rigorous self-discipline, the obliteration of the *nafs* through the experience of *fanā*, enduring existence in the state of *bakā'*, and the *culminating unveiling* of divine manifestation—guide the seeker toward a balance that transcends the division between the realm of the terrestrial and the celestial. This process, continuing from the preliminary unveiling (*kashf*) to the

deep apprehension of the self-disclosure of God (*tajallī*), delineates a transforming path in the spiritual journey of the seeker (*murīd*), a pivotal point wherein the individual is also referred to as the arrived (*wāsil*) or the desired (*murād*), in the Sufi lexicon. It modifies the seeker's awareness by directing their attention from the transient to the perpetual, thus fostering a deepened and reinvigorated comprehension of the ultimate Truth (*al-Haḳḳ/God*). In the *Mathnawī*, Rumi indicates a spiritual framework wherein genuine happiness is intricately connected to the recognition of the omnipresence of God and the soul's intimate communion with God. In this divine convergence, authentic contentment arises, held within the divine embrace.

Expanding on Rumi's metaphysical conviction that occurrences (phenomena) transcend mere physicality, becoming beaming with divine names and attributes (*al-asmā' al-husnā*), we acknowledge that emotional equilibrium in humans has a solid connection to their perception of the Truth (God), as in Sufi lexicon, is referred to as gnosis (*ma'rifa*). Within the Islamic intellectual discourse, the Qur'ān positions as a fundamental hermeneutical lens, unveiling/revealing the essence of the names and attributes of God: It announces that Allah possesses the most majestic designations as in the verse "most sublime names", (*Qur'ān*, 57: 3; 7: 180), illustrating not only on his incomprehensible grandeur and his limitless compassion and mercy. The Qur'ānic discourse emphasizes Allah's omnipresence as well as his intimate closeness to the human soul (*Qur'ān*, 2: 115; 50:16). Correspondingly, Rumi's *Mathnawī* resonates with this Divine immanence, articulating,

"Let us avert our inner gaze from our own selves towards Thee; verily, Thou art closer to us than our very selves. This invocation itself is Thy bestowed wisdom and guidance; otherwise, how can a rose-garden flourish in a land of ashes?"
(Rumi, 1925, II: 2445-2449).

Moreover, the Qur'ān stresses God's overarching Mercy and Compassion, going as far as to posit His mercy as surpassing His majesty. Within Rumi's view, emotional equilibrium is deeply contingent upon an intimate acquaintance with the Divine qualities and names. As elucidated in the *Mathnawī*, an absence of such knowledge often causes states of existential uneasiness and sorrow. In this view, sincerely exploring the many names of God, along with the cosmic signs he has revealed, is recommended as a pathway to inner peace and wise understanding. In this spiritual context, the search for true happiness becomes deeply linked with a thoughtful engagement with the divine names of God, as emphasized in the Qur'ān (*Qur'ān*, I: 3825-3826).

For Rumi, true happiness stems from a deep understanding of one's existence—an awareness that the Eternal Reality is omnipresent and in a mystic communion with the human spirit. This concept is voiced in the *Mathnawī* when Rumi declares: "Oh, happy is the man who was freed from himself with the existence of a living one!" (Rumi, 1925, I: 1535). Rumi suggests that when one entrusts their transient faculties to their finite physical existence, they face inherent constraints. However, by placing this reliance on God, they become vessels for Divine strength and resilience, mirroring insights from al-Qushayrī (249). Rumi enunciates this in a couplet: "What help is there but (to take) refuge with (God) the Helper? Despair is copper, and the elixir for it is (God's) regard" (Rumi, 1925, II: 3385-3386).

In Rumi's complex spiritual framework within the *Mathnawī*, human perception operates at the juncture of God's Majesty (*al-Jalāl*) and Beauty (*al-Jamāl*), encapsulated in Divine Names such as The Beneficent, the Merciful (*al-Rahmān, al-Rahīm*), and the Lord (*al-Rab*). These Names, more than just titles, mirror dual aspects of the Divine—awe and kindness. Crucially, Rumi underscores that God's beauty and mercy ultimately prevail over all other Divine aspects. Rumi elucidates that the dominion of the Mercy and the Beauty over other aspects of divinity reframes life's tribulations not as arbitrary hardships but as meticulously designed lessons for soulful evolution (Rifâi, 2000, 80-81).

The dynamic interplay of divine majesty and beauty injects an element of unpredictability into the cosmos, which reflects on the lives and souls of the individual in the form of the spiritual states of contraction and expansion (*kabḍ* and *bast*). In the tapestry of human existence, life does not unfold as a continual melody of love; it is interspersed with myriad challenges. Rumi encapsulates this existential reality in the *Mathnawī* through the allegory of a man, jug in hand, seeking water across various lands, only to find his efforts thwarted by a fall, symbolizing the fragility and transience of worldly pursuits. According to Rumi, this account is a metaphor for the human state, illustrating that genuine happiness and contentment are not of this worldly realm but part of a divine purpose intended to preclude extreme attachment to mortal life. It is a notice that fulfillment of each desire is not promised, a moral lesson that becomes increasingly apparent in the lives of Prophets and saints who are subjected to trials to shield them from the temptations of the world. Rumi's depiction of the seek for water—symbolizing the spiritual quest for divine knowledge and contentment—repeats the profound lecture from a different angle: the pursuit of transient pleasures leads to disappointment invariably, whereas real happiness is embedded in divine communion.

Therefore, remembering God (*dhikr*) serves as a gateway between the human spirit and divine essence, a ritual not of mere reiteration but of aligning one's perception with the divine attributes encapsulated in the beautiful names of God. It is through remembrance that the soul embarks on a transformative journey, shedding the veils of materiality to bask in the light of divine presence. This process not only liberates the individual from the transient woes of worldly life but also cultivates an inner sanctum of peace and divine love, marking the culmination of the spiritual odyssey toward true happiness. For Rumi, remembrance of God (*dhikr*) entails rote repetition and a dual, harmonious function: a conscious alignment with God's Divine Names and a transformative spiritual exercise. It restores one's original, transcendent nature, freeing them from worldly distractions and elevates the spiritual state, liberating the soul from mundane concerns. (Rumi, 1925, I: 3466-3499). This engenders a renewed trust in God, endowing even life's harshest difficulties with sacred purpose, appearing as blessings in disguise. Accordingly, the aspirant is not consumed by the fire of the divine punitive but enlightened by the transcendent luminosity of God, surrounded by the luminosity of the presence of the Encompassing. The climax of this transformative expedition, a life permeated with Divine love, signaling not merely a culmination but an exciting commencement leading toward true happiness—a state demanding our further examination.

Developing on Divine love, a central theme in Sufi literature, Rumi asserts that love is more than sentiment; it serves as a metaphysical guide leading us toward God. This essential concept echoes throughout the *Mathnawī*, where Rumi explores divine love as an intense energy that revitalizes human existence and reduces pain that might originate any material engagement. Love promotes spiritual growth and strengthens the bond with God, leading to spiritual fulfillment and enlightenment:

“Passion makes the old medicine new; passion lops every bough of weariness. Passion is the elixir that makes (things) new: How (can there be) weariness where passion has arisen? Oh, do not sigh heavily from weariness: seek passion, seek passion, passion, passion!” (Rumi, 1934, VI: 4302-4304).

Rumi contends that one permeated with divine love is shielded from the diverse tribulations of the worldly realm. Such a devotee discovers that perpetual mindfulness of the Divine Presence evolves into a life characterized by enduring joy. Here, Divine Love not only mitigates terrestrial afflictions but steers the soul towards its fundamental, inexpressible essence, morphing into a powerful tonic that transmutes existential ennui into a fervent quest, each step is a homecoming to one’s genuine spiritual core.

Delving into the essence of spiritual fulfillment, Rumi posits that Divine love transcends being a lofty ideal; it is a metamorphic force guiding the seeker to their true essence, as depicted in the *Mathnawī*’s tale of Laylī and Majnūn—a love story widely written in Eastern literature (Rumi, 1925, I: 408-415). This metaphorical narrative underscores the sublime, encompassing nature of divine affection, surpassing all earthly love and attraction. Majnūn, engrossed in his devotion to Laylī, sees his worldly struggles vanish into celestial joy, making him an eternal symbol for seekers. Laylī epitomizes the Divine beauty beckoning us all. Rumi articulates, “Happy it is for a friend to be remembered by friends, in particular when that (beloved) is Layla and this (lover) Majnūn” (Rumi, 1925, I: 1559), affirming Divine love’s transcendence and unparalleled ecstasy. He urges seekers to immerse in the boundless sea of sacred love, mindful of its ever-fluctuating currents, akin to the spiritual states of contraction and expansion (*kaḥḍ* and *bast*), as another form of denoting the spiritual journey’s peaks and troughs. He resonates with *sulūk*, a spiritual odyssey shifting focus from transient worldly bonds to the Eternal Being, paralleling Prophet Ibrahim’s transformation from adoring fleeting celestial entities to acknowledging the ultimate Divine presence. This metamorphosis is further depicted in the *Mathnawī*, the tribulations encountered by God’s chosen emissaries, from Ibrahim’s fiery ordeal to Muhammad’s losses (Rumi, 1930, III: 2340-2345), symbolizing tests meant to intensify their love and compassion. These trials reflect the purpose of God to refine the soul, reminding seekers that genuine contentment is only attainable through a profound reorientation toward the transcendent (Rumi, 1925, I: 3825-3826).

Conclusion

In this scholarly examination of Mawlānā Djalāl al-Dīn Rūmī’s the *Mathnawī-ī Ma’ nawī*, we delve into a nuanced philosophy of happiness that weaves together the threads of Sufism with traditional Islamic teachings. Rumi conceptualizes happiness

not as a momentary emotional state but as a profound spiritual realization attained through interrelated processes of comprehending objects, self, and, ultimately, the divine. The expedition to genuine contentment instigates knowledge of objects—a recognition of the transient nature of the material world, prompting the seeker towards a deeper inquiry beyond the apparent glamour of possessions. This inaugural awakening lays the groundwork for self-knowledge, in which individuals acknowledge their inherent divine essence, distinguishing them from the ordinary and igniting a longing for a profound relationship with the Truth (*al-Ḥaqq*). In surpassing the confines of the self and attaining the states of contentment (*riḍā*) and annihilation (*fanā'*), this spiritual odyssey culminates in the acquisition of divine knowledge (*ma'rifa*), wherein happiness is perceived, and experiences as a profound union with the God. Rumi's insights, elaborately embedded in the Sufi tradition, propose an altering pathway shifting from the ephemeral to the eternal. Through the *Mathnawī*, Rūmī encourages the reader to embark on a path of spiritual enlightenment, where happiness emerges as the natural outcome of a life aligned with divine will, marked by a harmonious balance between worldly engagements and spiritual aspirations. This analysis enriches our understanding of Islamic and Sufi conceptions of happiness, positioning Rūmī's insights as both a continuation and a deepening of Islamic philosophical discourse. It also underscores the timeless relevance of his teachings in addressing the quest for authentic happiness in the human experience.

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