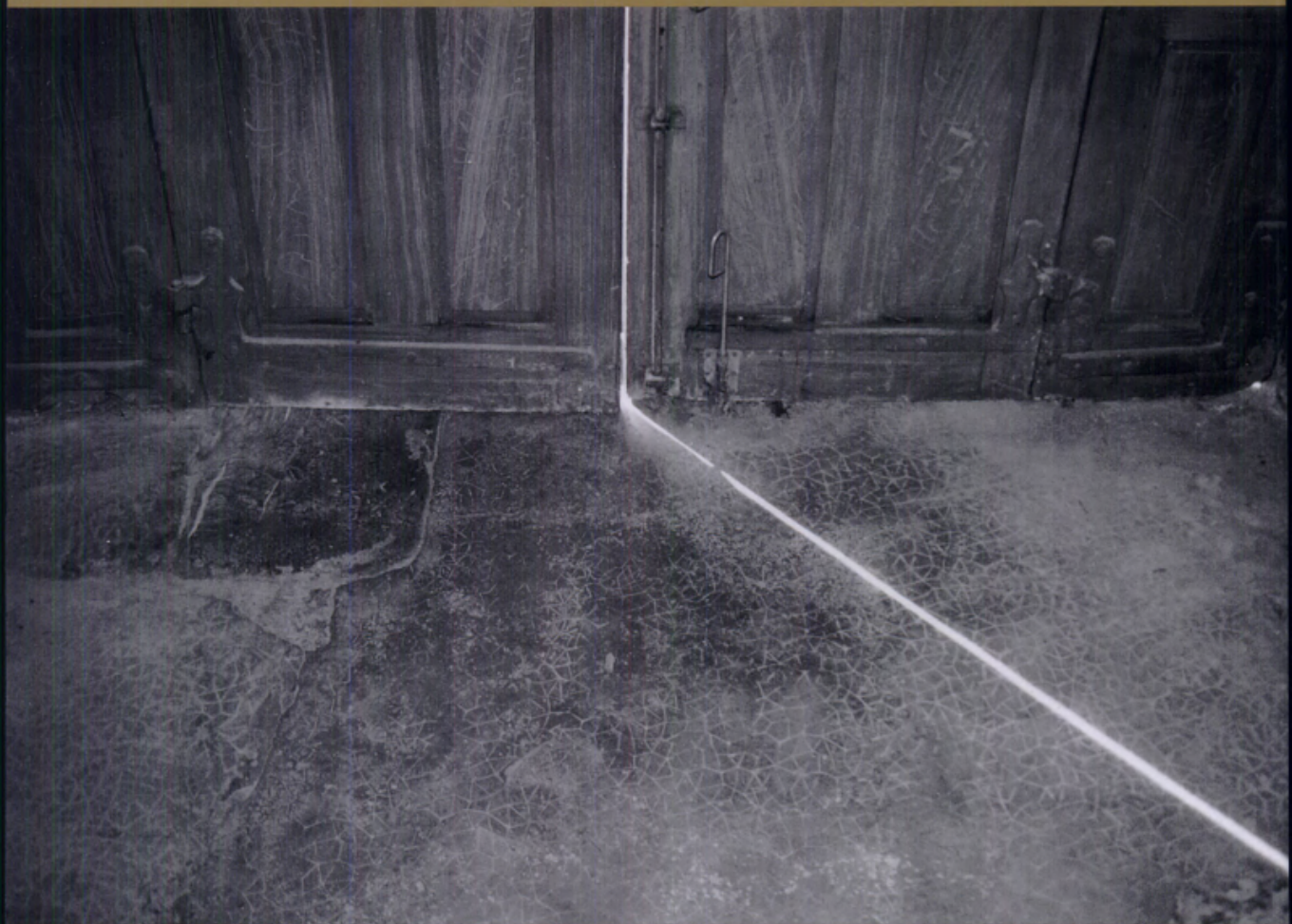


ANDREW HARVEY

Light Upon Light

Inspirations from RUMI



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ANDREW HARVEY

Photographs by
Eryk Hanut



North Atlantic Books
Berkeley, California

Light Upon Light: Inspirations from Rumi

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Introduction

 When the great Sufi mystic and poet Jalal-ud-Din Rumi died at sunset in Konya, Southern Turkey, on December 17th, 1273, he had lived for almost half his sixty-six years in the Sun of the Awakened Heart. With the light of its splendor as his constant inspiration, Rumi composed 3,500 odes, 2,000 quatrains, a vast spiritual epic called the *Mathnawi*, and founded the Mevlevi Order that, under his son Sultan Walad and his successors, was to spread his vision throughout the Islamic world, from the most remote villages of Turkey and Iran to Jakarta, from Tangiers to Sarajevo. Now, over 700 years later, through the pioneering (and superb) translations of Coleman Barks, Robert Bly, Jonathan Star, and others, Rumi is almost as well known and revered in the West as he has long been in the East.

Not long before his death, Rumi wrote of his passion for his Beloved, Shams-I-Tabriz, and its significance:

*Those tender words we said to one another
Are stored in the secret heart of heaven.
One day, like the rain, they will fall and spread
And their mystery will grow green over the world.*

The time has come for this greening of the world's heart and mind by the mystery of Rumi's love for his Beloved. Increasingly, Rumi is being recognized as the unique spiritual genius he is, as someone who fused at the highest level and with the greatest possible intensity the intellect of a Plato, the vision, passion, and soul-force of a Christ or Buddha, and the extraordinary literary gifts of a Shakespeare. Rumi is, I believe, not only the world's greatest mystic poet but also an essential guide to the new planetary spiritual renaissance that is slowly emerging from the ruins of our civilization. He speak to us from the depths of our own sacred identity, and what he says has the electric eloquence of our own innermost

truth. No other poet or teacher or philosopher of whom I know has Rumi's almost frightening intimacy of address, and no one I am aware of in any civilization has conveyed the terror, rapture, and wonder of awakening to Divine Love with such fearless and gorgeous courage, such humility, and such unflinching clarity.

Our shared planetary future depends on our taking—alone and together, and soon—the journey into Love. There is no wiser, more astute, or more inspiring guide to this journey than Rumi. *Light Upon Light* is a distillation of twenty years' devotion and love for Rumi's work in all its forms—poems, table-talk, letters—into an arrangement that can convey the range of his wisdom as passionately and comprehensively as possible. I have selected those passages and poems which have most shaken and helped me in my own search, and organized them into a five-part mystical symphony. The texts are presented in a complex musical order and unfolding that mirrors the order and unfolding of the mystical journey into Love itself. I hope to communicate the authentic rhythms of awakening, with its alternating, mutually illuminating periods of expansion and contraction, passion and discipline, ecstasy and necessary—and repeated—ordeal.

In this selection, I have especially emphasized an aspect of Rumi's work which I believe is crucial to us now—its fierce and humble rigor. Rumi is never sentimental; he suffered hugely for his illumination and knew that the mystery of accepting grief and death had to be learned in the furnace of a transformation that burns away all illusion. There is a seared and sometimes ferocious honesty about his testimony to the mystical life that we all need to listen to and tune ourselves by. Especially in a time and world like ours, where fantasy, frivolity, exaggeration, and imprecision are rampant, and the difficulties of real spiritual growth are too often shirked or scanted.

I have worked from literal and scholarly versions of the texts, along with more literary translations of all kinds in several languages. My primary sources include the work of A. J. Arberry, E. H. Whinfield, R. A. Nicholson, W. C. Chittick, and the marvelous French



translations of Eva de Vitray-Meyerovitch. On rare occasions I have cut or added where I think Rumi's intention demands it. The longer poems come from the *Diwan of Shams-I-Tabriz* or the *Mathnawi*, the great majority of the longer prose passages from the *Discourses*, the quatrains from the *Rubaiyat*, and a few short passages from Rumi's letters. The brief quotations that pepper the text are nearly always from the *Odes* or the *Discourses*.

Ideally, I would like *Light Upon Light* to be read alongside my earlier work *The Way of Passion: A Celebration of Rumi*, in which I try to give my vision of how Rumi can be approached most richly and deeply. Friends who have read *Light Upon Light* in manuscript, tell me the best way of entering it is to read it all the way through several times, slowly and intensely, in order to experience—and inwardly recreate—its musical progression, and then to concentrate on clusters of different poems and passages. In this way, reading the book can become a way of allowing Rumi's vision to saturate slowly one's heart and mind.

The world is in terrible danger. We have very little time left in which to make desperately needed changes in every arena of life. We need the truth and empowerment of authentic mystical understanding and love now more than at any other moment of our history. May the Light of the Heart be revealed in and to all of us, and may we all, united in and by Divine Love, transform together the conditions of life on earth.

Andrew Harvey
January 1996

*I dedicate this Introduction to Carol Ricotta, in gratitude
for the example of her courage and unwavering love of justice.*

FIRST MOVEMENT



The Call



If You Are Seeking



If you are seeking, seek us with joy
For we live in the kingdom of joy.
Do not give your heart to anything else
But to the love of those who are clear joy,
Do not stray into the neighborhood of despair.
For there are hopes: they are real, they exist—
Do not go in the direction of darkness—
I tell you: suns exist.




There doesn't exist a being Your grace cannot transfigure,
And the Lover You choose lives in joy forever.
What atom could Your Grace even for a moment come near
Without making it more magnificent than a thousand suns?



All theologies are straws His Sun burns to dust;
Knowing takes you to the Threshold, but not through the Door.
Nothing can teach you if you don't unlearn everything
How learned I was, before Revelation made me dumb.

The Real Sun

 The sun you see in the sky is imitative and metaphorical; there is a far more real sun that is manifesting everything. Everything is one of its rays, everything is born from this sun and dies back into it. It is this sun you should yearn for, so that you can come to see something more than just sense-objects, and so your knowledge can go on and on growing.

There is another sun, apart from the sun of physical form, a sun through which inner truths and realities are unveiled. Any partial knowledge that enthralls you is a branch of that great knowledge and a ray of it. And this ray is summoning you to that great knowledge and that Sun of Origin.

“There are those who are called from afar.”

You draw that knowledge towards yourself. This knowledge says: “I cannot be contained here in this world, and you are taking your time arriving in my world. It is impossible for me to be contained in your world, and you will find it difficult to arrive in mine.” Do not despair. Bringing about the impossible is impossible; succeeding in the difficult is not. So, although it is difficult, strive to attain the great knowledge, and never expect it to be contained here in any way, for that is impossible.

What is the goal of all of this? Imagine a tree whose roots are fixed firmly in the garden of Spirit. Its branches and boughs have become suspended elsewhere, and its fruits have been scattered. What is essential is that these fruits should be brought back to the garden, where the roots of the tree are. The tree might outwardly sing God’s praises and do all sorts of devotional exercises, but if its roots are really in this world, then its fruit will be brought back into this world, too. If both roots and fruit are in that world and that garden, then there is Light upon Light.

Oh Life of the Soul! Since you have a house
In every atom of this world,
Why doesn't the dust of the road sing?
Why are stones shut down?
Why does poison taste terrible?
Why do thorns pierce?
Why does anger flame into violence?
Why are nights black?
One day in the garden of Your Face
I couldn't keep from being amazed
At how, during Your Reign,
A thorn could still be a thorn.
"Has He," I thought, "out of self-jealousy,
Masked His own face?
Does He sustain this 'otherness'
So others cannot glimpse Him at all?
Or is it that the world's eye
Is so cancered-over, so darkened,
It can see nothing, nothing at all,
Of the tenderness of that radiant Face?"

You haven't dared yet lose faith—so how can faith
grow in you?
You haven't dared yet risk your heart—so what can
you see of reality?
You're obsessed—still!—with the carnal screams
of your life.
How do you hope to step into the Mystery of the King?




You are a sea of gnosis hidden in a drop of dew,
You are a whole universe hidden in a sack of blood.
What are all this world's pleasures and joys
That you keep grasping at them to make you alive?
Does the sun borrow light from a mote of dust?
Does Venus look for wine from a cracked jug?




There is no angel so sublime, He whispered,
Who can be granted for one moment
What is granted you forever.
And I hung my head, astounded.

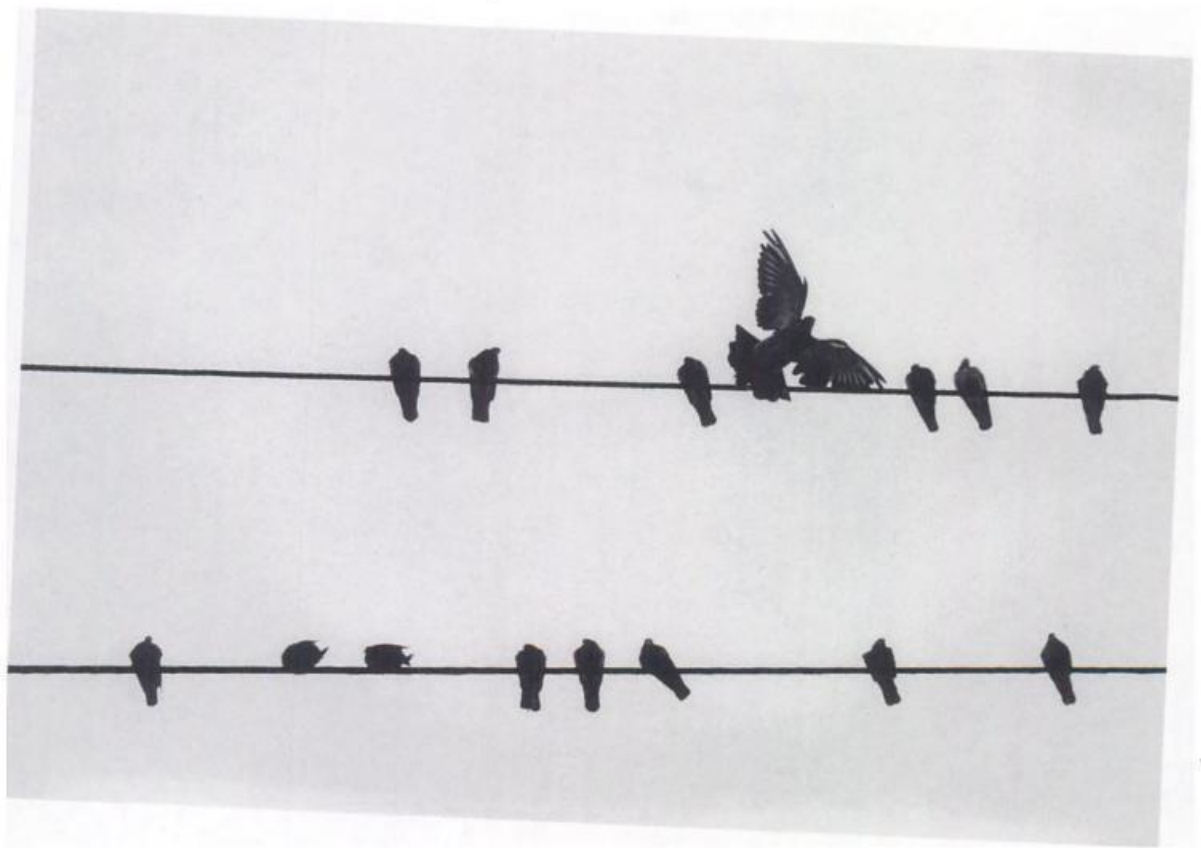
The Emperor and the Hawk

 When a poacher lays a trap and snares little birds in it to eat and sell—that you can convincingly call cunning. But if an emperor lays a trap to catch an ignorant, worthless hawk, which has no awareness of its intrinsic nature, in order to teach it himself, on his own wrist, so that it can become noble, aware, and bright-eyed with pure, fearless knowledge—that you cannot call cunning. It may *seem* like cunning, but in fact it is the height of Truth, Justice, and Magnanimity; it is an act that deserves to be called “Resurrection” because it does nothing less than bring the dead to life, and can be called “Alchemy” because it transforms an ordinary stone into the richest of rubies. If a hawk knew why the emperor wanted to catch it, there wouldn’t be any need for bait and a trap; with a wild glad heart it would look for the trap itself and fly through lightning and thunder to the wrist of the king.

Leap Free of the Cage

 How could the soul not take flight
When from the glorious Presence
A soft call flows sweet as honey,
And whispers, "Rise up now, come away."
How could the fish not jump
Immediately from dry land into water,
When the sound of water from the ocean
Of fresh waves springs to his ear?
How could the hawk not fly away,
Back, back, to the wrist of the king
As soon as he hears the drum
The king's baton hits again and again,
Drumming out the signal of return?
How could the Sufi not start to dance,
Turning on himself, like the atom in the sun of eternity,
So he can leap free of this dying world?
Fly away, fly away, bird, to your native home.
You have leaped free of the cage,
Your wings are flung back in the wind of God.
Leave behind the stagnant and marshy waters,
Hurry, hurry, hurry, O bird, to the source of life!





Destroy Yourself



Destroy your own house, destroy it now!
Don't wait one more minute! Pull the whole house down!
A treasure greater than Pharaoh's is hidden under it.
Go and build with that a million houses!
In the end, whether you like it or not,
Your house will be pulled down and destroyed,
And the treasure under it revealed.
But then it will not belong to you—
For you can only own the treasure
If you destroy your house yourself.
How can you get the pay if you haven't done the work?
Do you imagine the Koran is speaking lightly when it says,
"Human beings don't get anything they haven't worked for"?



Time's tailor has never made a robe for anyone
Without then slashing it to pieces.
See how the million fools of this world
Pay Satan heaps of gold for pain!
Don't stretch out your legs on this earth-carpet,
It is a borrowed bed; fear that day
His messengers come to roll it up forever. . . .
How can you go on gazing at the body's dust?
Search out the Horseman of the Soul!
Train your vision with passion and longing,
And see the Horseman at the heart of this dust-storm!



We are darkness and God is Light; this house
Receives all splendor from the Sun.
Here, the Light is mingled with shadow.
Do you want your light totally pure?
Leave the house and climb onto the roof.



You have seen the shapes the dust makes—
Now, see the Wind.
You have seen the foam, churning—
Now, see the Ocean of Flaming Power!

Terrible destruction dances and the world's days darken.
If you want Supreme Reality, hide from fame.
You're looking for the Pearl? Plunge, now, to the sea's bottom.
What's on the shore is only foam.




All of created existence is drunk on the Heart
The entire cosmos is a toy in Its hands.
All the nine levels of the spheres of Heaven
Are only two short steps for the Heart.



Speculation and grief find no life or support
Here where wine dances and soul-music plays.
O my heart-friends, taste deep of Eternal Joy!
Like flowers and grasses, bow your lips to the stream.


Same Moon

 Generations have passed and this is a new generation. The moon is always the same, only the water changes. Justice remains the same justice, learning the same learning, as people and nations change.

Generations have passed; the true meanings stay constant and are eternal. The water in the stream may have changed a million times—the reflection of the moon and stars stays the same.



Different Paths, One Goal

 There are a myriad different ways to search, but the object of the search is always the same. Don't you see that the roads to Mecca are all different? One comes from Byzantium, another from Syria, still others wind through land or across the sea. The roads are different; the goal is one.

When people reach the goal, all quarrels or disputes that flared along the road are resolved. Those who yelled at each other along the road, "You are wrong!" or "You are a blasphemer!" forget all possible differences when they reach the goal. There all hearts sing in unison.

One, One, One



The lamps are different,
But the Light is the same.

So many garish lamps in the dying brain's lamp-shop,
Forget about them.

Concentrate on essence, concentrate on Light.

In lucid bliss, calmly smoking off its own holy fire,

The Light streams towards you from all things,

All people, all possible permutation of good, evil,
thought, passion.

The lamps are different,

But the Light is the same.

One matter, one energy, one Light, one Light-mind,

Endlessly emanating all things.

One turning and burning diamond,

One, one, one.

Ground yourself, strip yourself down,

To blind loving silence.

Stay there, until you see

You are gazing at the Light

With its own ageless eyes.



The Real King



There was a dervish once who entered the presence of a king.

The king started to pay him tribute and said, "O ascetic."

The dervish quickly interrupted, "*You* are the ascetic."


"Me?" the king gasped, astonished, "How am I an ascetic, seeing that the whole earth is mine?"

The dervish smiled, "You see things the opposite of how they really are. This world and the next one, and everything in both, belongs to me. I have taken into my possession all the worlds. What you have become satisfied with is a handful of dust and rags."



My heart, that dervish vagabond,
Poured me the wine of oblivion.
I staggered toward the House of Wine
Dancing, dancing, dragging this old cloak.

Flash by Flash

 What is the point of reaching the sea and being satisfied with a tiny jug of water? There are pearls in the sea, and from the sea heaps of ravishing, strange, and precious things can be won. And you are satisfied with just taking some water? You call yourself intelligent? Consider this world as it really is—just a bubble of foam of that great sea, and think: where is the pearl itself? This world is foam flecked with swirling flotsam; because the waves turn and churn continually, the foam comes to take on shapes of different kinds of beauty. This beauty is borrowed; its real essence is elsewhere. It is counterfeit coin, valueless and worthless, made by divine magic to appear wonderful.

Human beings are the astrolabe of God, but a real astronomer is required to know how to use the astrolabe. What would a grocer do with an astrolabe, and what happiness could he derive from it? How could he utilize so subtle a thing and come to know through it the secrets of the movements of the heavens, of the planets and their influences, powers, combinations, and transits? In the hands of a real astronomer, the astrolabe reveals marvel after marvel, for he who knows himself knows his Lord.

A copper astrolabe, then, is a mirror of the heavens; a human being is the astrolabe of God. When God graces a human being gnosis of Him, and brings that human being to know Him and be intimate with Him, then through the astrolabe of his own being he perceives, moment by moment, flash by flash, the flaming-out of God and His Infinite Beauty, and that beauty is never absent from his mirror.

How can you ever hope to know the Beloved
Without becoming in every cell the Lover?
And when you are the Lover at last, you don't care.
Whatever you know, or don't—only Love is real.




Last night a friend asked me, "Where is your homeland?"
I said nothing, for what could I say?
My homeland is not Egypt or Syria or Iraq.
My homeland's a place that has never had a name.



Root my being in certainty
So I witness You without fear.
Even as the waves of blood crash over me
And the worlds char in fire.

The One Thing You Must Never Forget

 There is one thing in the world which you must never forget. If you were to forget everything else and remembered this, then you would have nothing at all to worry about; but if you were to remember everything else and then forget this, you would have done nothing with your life.

It is as if a king sent you to a country to carry out a particular mission. You go to that country, you do a hundred different things; but if you do not perform the mission assigned to you, it is as if you have done nothing. All human beings have come into the world for a particular mission, and that mission is our singular purpose. If we do not enact it, we have done nothing.

In the Koran, God says: "We offered the Trust to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains. They refused it, and were afraid; and man carried it. In all truth, man is full of sin and folly."

"We offered the Trust to the heavens, but they could not accept it." Think for a moment how many things are done by the heavens, at which human reason reels in amazement. The heavens transform ordinary stones into rubies; the heavens make mountains into mines of gold and silver; the heavens make herbs and grasses grow and dance into life, turning the earth into a Garden of Eden. Think of the earth, too, how it receives seed and breaks into blossom and fruit; how it covers up all wounds and imperfections; how it accepts and unveils incessantly a hundred thousand miracles that no tongue could ever fully enumerate. All these things the heavens and the earth perform, yet the one thing God speaks of is not performed by them. That supreme mission is humankind's.

God says in the Koran, "And we honored the Children of Adam." God did not say, "And we honored heaven and earth." That mission that the heavens and earth cannot enact is meant to be enacted by humankind. And when a person carries out that mission, "sin"



and “folly”—the sin and folly instinctual to his nature—run away from him.

Now, if you were to say, “Look, even if I have not performed this mission I have, after all, performed a hundred others,” that would mean nothing. You were not created for those other missions. It is as if you were to buy a sword of priceless Indian steel such as one usually finds only in the treasuries of emperors, and were to turn it into a butcher’s knife for cutting up rotten meat, saying, “Look, I’m not letting this sword stay unused, I am putting it to a thousand highly useful purposes.” Or it is as though you were to take a golden bowl and cook turnips in it, while for just one grain of that gold you could purchase hundreds of pots.

Or it is as though you were to take a dagger of the most finely-wrought and tempered steel and use it as a nail to hang a broken pitcher on, saying, “I’m making excellent use of my dagger. I’m hanging a broken pitcher on it, after all. It is not standing useless.” How absurd and how sad that would be! When you can hang a picture on a nail that costs only a few cents, what sense does it make to use a dagger worth a fortune?

God the Omnipotent, the Glorious, has set a very high price on each one of you, for in His Book He says, “God has purchased their selves and possessions from the believers, and given in their stead the gift of Paradise.”

The poet says:

*You are more valuable than both heaven and earth.
What else can I say? You don't know your own worth.
Do not sell yourself at a ridiculous price,
You who are so valuable in God's eyes.*

God is always saying to you, “Look, I have purchased you—each moment of your life, each breath, all of your possessions and lives. And if you spend all of them on me, if you offer them to me, I will give you in exchange—Paradise. Realize how infinitely I value you.”



How long will you move backward? Come forward; do not stray in unbelief, come dancing to Divine Knowledge. Look, the elixir is hidden in the poison, come to the poison and come, return to the root of the root of your own self.

You think you are earthly beings, but you have been kneaded from the Light of Certainty. You are the guardians of God's Light, so come, return to the root of the root of your own self.


Once you have tied yourself to selflessness, you will be delivered from selfhood and released from the teeth of a hundred snares. So come, return to the root of the root of your own self.

You were born vice-regent of the children of God, but you have lowered your eyes to this sad world; how can you be happy with these scraps? Come, return to the root of the root of your own self.

You are the talisman protecting the world's treasure; within yourself you are the Mine. Open your hidden eyes and come, return to the root of your own self.

You were born of the rays of God's majesty and have won the grace of your auspicious star; how long will you suffer at the hands of things that do not exist? Come, return to the root of the root of your own self.

Mary and Gabriel

 When Mary saw Gabriel, she became terrified and cried out
(She was alone, and half-clothed, and feared the worst)—
“I take refuge in Divine Protection!”

Mary grew tormented, like a fish on dry land.

Then Gabriel, Icon of Divine Generosity, said to her:

“I am the faithful messenger of God! Don’t run away!”

(And while Gabriel was speaking to her, a ray

Of pure light broke from his lips and soared to Arcturus.)

“You are running away from me,” he went on, “to the invisible
world;

I am King there, and the Bearer of the Standard.

You take refuge from me in God, yet in eternity I am

The image of He who is the only refuge.

I am that refuge that was often your deliverance.


You look for refuge against me; I am myself that refuge.”

SECOND MOVEMENT



The Possibility

Another World Altogether

 God has created all causes, in such a way that to a drop of sperm that did not possess either hearing, or intelligence, or spirit, or sight, or grief, or joy, or superiority, or inferiority, He has given a shelter in the womb. There, He transformed water into blood and coagulated and modeled that blood into skin; and there, where there were no hands or limbs of any kind before He created the windows of the mouth, eyes, and ears, fashioned the tongue and throat, and the chest's cave in which he placed a heart that is, all at once, a drop and a world, pearl and ocean, slave and king. What intelligence exists that could understand how He could lead us from such a miserable place and state of ignorance to where we are now?

God has said, "Have you seen or heard from where I have taken you and will take you? I tell you that I will not leave you even where you are now; I will lead you beyond this heaven and this earth, into a purer heaven and earth that you cannot imagine, whose nature is to expand the soul in joy. In the heart of this new heaven what is young and fresh never withers, what is new never loses its luster, nothing grows corrupted or falls into ruin, nothing dies, no one who has once awoken ever sleeps again, because sleep is made for rest and the scattering of grief, and here there is no exhaustion or grief.

And if you do not believe what I am saying, just think for a moment: how could that drop of sperm have believed you if you had told it that God had created another world outside its world of darkness, a world where there is a sky, a sun, moonlight, provinces, towns, villages, gardens; where there exist created beings—kings and millionaires, people in fine health, sick people, the blind?"


No intelligence would believe such a far-fetched story—and yet there exists, outside these shadows and this food of blood,



another world altogether and quite another food. And although the drop of sperm ignored and denied such a possibility, yet it could not avoid arriving at it, because it was forced outside.

One day, you will find yourself outside this world which is like a womb. You will leave this earth to enter, while you are still in the body, a vast expanse, and you *will* know that the words “God’s earth is vast” describe this region from which the saints have come.

The Real Miracles


 It isn't so amazing or miraculous for someone to be able to go from here to Mecca in an afternoon or a moment. The wind, after all, performs such a miracle: in an afternoon, or a moment, it can go wherever it wants.

The real miracle is that God should take you from a low and miserable stage to the highest honor, that you should come from there to here, from ignorance to reason, from selfishness to adoration, from the unliving to life. At first you were earth, then mineral, and then His power brought you into the vegetable world; then you traveled from there to the world of sperm and womb, and from there to the animal world, and from the animal world into the human one. The real miracles are those that occur on the journey in God to God. All the experiences and openings you had on the way—could you have even begun to imagine them before they happened? Did you have any idea what roads you would take before you took them? Yet you have definitely arrived here.

In exactly the same way, and with exactly the same mercy and mystery and strange providence, you will be brought to thousands of other worlds.

Have faith, always, and if you are told stories of such worlds by people you trust—believe them.

Hollow Drum

 This world is like a drum; people marvel at its sound and crowd around. In fact, the drum is hollow, has no skin, and no real interest. Happy is the man who has found the Perfume-Maker's House and whose heart has grown cold to the rat-a-tat of the drum of this world.




From one horizon to another, this world breeds only grief.
Frivolous fool! Don't go looking for suffering—
Even if you could make the sun and moon a crown for your head,
When you die, you'll still prop your head on a brick.



Each Breath a Treasure

“Be strenuous now, so when death arrives
It finds the perfume of your soul near the Beloved.”

 In the Koran, God says: “He who has done an atom of good will see it.” This world is the seed-time of the Beyond. If you are lazy at seed-time, you weep at harvest, when all tears are futile.

It is today, now, that we must use and profit from each breath, for each of our breaths is a treasure, the philosopher’s stone. Spend each breath on the Path to God and never grow desperate.

Love for the Creator is latent in all human beings and in everything in the world, in fact in all things that have being. How could anyone not love the One who gave him or her being? Love is latent in every human being, but obstructions veil that love; when those obstructions are taken away, love flashes out and becomes real.

Why am I only speaking of things that have being? Non-being too is in tumult, passionate to be given being by Him. Imagine four people before a king. Each one feels shy of the others, because his or her expectation is at odds to what the others want. So they all feel shy of each other, for each wants to be the first to be brought into being, and each cries out secretly: "Make me be!" If this is the situation with non-beings, imagine what the things that do have being are feeling. As the Koran says, "There is nothing that does not proclaim His praise."

This is not to be wondered at; what is to be wondered at is that there is no *no-thing* that does not proclaim his praise.

Both unbelief and faith are seeking you.

And both proclaim your undivided Oneness.


There are two kinds of intellect; the first is acquired—
Thanks to it, you learn like a schoolboy
Books, teachers, reflection, concepts, all kinds of
sciences . . .

You learn and your intellect grows superior.
But conserving this knowledge is always a burden.
The other intellect is God's pure gift;
Its heart is in the breast of the soul.
When the water of divine gnosis jets from the heart
It never becomes stagnant or old or dirty.
And if it can't flow outside, what does that matter?
It keeps foaming up from within the heart.



There's an intellect like the sun's blazing disc—
And one inferior to Venus or a shooting star.
There's an intellect like a flickering lamp,
And one like a brilliant star of fire,
That when all clouds are pulled back from Its Face
Births eyes that contemplate the Light of God.

Have the Courage to Say “God”

 Human beings are in love with what they have never seen or heard or understood; day and night, they hunger for it, run after it. I myself am the slave of the One I cannot see; I myself am one who is exhausted from always running from what I have seen and understood. Philosophers deny that God can be seen; if He could be seen, they point out, then eyes could also weary of Him and that cannot be possible. Sunni theologians say that He can only really be seen in the moment when He appears one-colored, since in every other moment He is appearing in a thousand colors.

What I know, however, is this: if God revealed himself a hundred thousand times, not one of them would resemble another. In God, everything is always new-minted, fresh-born. You are actually seeing God this moment; every moment you are seeing God's thousand colors displayed in His works and acts. Not one of God's acts resembles any other. Joy is one of His epiphanies, so is grieving, so is fear, so is hope. Just as the acts of God and the epiphany of His acts and works are infinitely varied, so the epiphany of His Essences is also infinitely varied.

I remember this verse from the Koran, “It is We who have sent down the Remembrance and it is we who stand guard over it.”

For me, this verse means: “We have placed in your core a seeking and a longing. We stand guard over them, so they are not wasted but are brought to fruition.”

Have the courage to say “God” once, and stand firm under all the catastrophes that then rain down upon you. A man came to Mohammed and said, “I sincerely love you.” The Prophet said, “Take care what you say.” The man repeated, “I sincerely and deeply love you.” Again the Prophet said, “Take care what you say.” The man repeated, “I sincerely love you.” “Good,” said the Prophet, “now stand firm while I kill you with my own hands.”

Another man said to Mohammed, "I do not want your religion. Take it back. Ever since I entered it I have not had a single day of peace. I've lost my money, my wife, my child, all the respect I had, all the strength, all the passion." The Prophet replied, "Wherever our religion has gone it does not return without uprooting a person utterly and sweeping clean his house."

As the Koran says, "No one but the purified shall touch it." God is the final Beloved. As long as there remains in you a single hair of self-love, God will not and cannot show the glory of His face to you; you will not be worthy of union with Him and He will not unveil Himself to you. Become dead to yourself and the world, become your own shrewdest and most implacable enemy, so then, at last, He may show you His face.

To return to the man who was complaining of the path, and the suffering it brought, the Prophet said to him, "The grieving you are going through is a purging of the illusions that have enslaved you and made you a prisoner of your false self. Imagine you had eaten something poisonous—wouldn't a doctor give you something to purge it, and wouldn't he say to you, 'Eat nothing until your stomach has discharged its poison'? When all the poison has left, then you can eat." So be patient, and let yourself grieve: grieving is a purgation. After it, great joy will visit you, a joy that has no pain, that is a thornless rose, a wine that leaves no headache.

You are looking for peace in a world that cannot give it to you. Whatever comfort or consolation any of us finds in this world passes like a lightning flash. And there are so many kinds of lightning, too—lightning full of snow, full of hail, full of rain; lightning full of death and torment. Think of a man setting out for Antalya: he heads in the direction of Caesarea, hoping to reach Antalya, and travels on and on blindly, ignorant of the fact that he can never reach his destination. The man who heads out on the Antalya road, however weak he is, or lame, will reach his goal since it is at the end of the road.

No important worldly task can be accomplished without pain,



so how could the Supreme Task not be hard to bring to completion? You have to suffer, one way or the other. There is no way out. At least devote your suffering to finding that Door of Adoration, which is the only way out. You are going to die anyway; why not die, while you are alive, into the Life that will never die, into the Love that is Eternal Life?

What is the essential spirit of all sciences?
To know who you will be on the Day of Resurrection!



Whip up the waves of non-being and wash me away!
How long will I walk up and down the shore in fear?




If one drop of Divine Drunkenness fell
On the intellects of everyone in the world,
The world and its beings, free will, and obedience—
All, all, would vanish in a moment.



God has a hidden wine, my friend, and one
Of its drops became you and the world.
The next time He lets one drop of this wine fall,
You'll be sprung free of this world, the next, yourself.

Mid-Way

 There are three kinds of creature. First—angels. Angels are pure intelligence. Their nature and their nourishment are worship, service, and perpetual remembrance of God. They eat and live by these exactly like fish live in and by water. Angels are under no burden of obligation. They have no desire, so they have no need to struggle against it. And while they obey God's will, they are not considered to be "obedient"; obedience is their essence.

Then there are animals. They are pure desire, desire in its naked state, unmediated by anything we know as moral intelligence.


Now comes poor, baffled, humankind—that strange hybrid of intelligence and desire. Man is half-beast, half-angel. The fish in man attracts him toward the shining water; the serpent in him drags him toward the earth. No wonder he is always in turmoil, always in battle, with himself and others. "He whose intelligence conquers his desires is higher than the angels; he whose desire overwhelms his intelligence sinks lower than any animal."

The angel is always saved by knowledge; the animal by its unadorned ignorance. Man is between them, struggling, suffering, aspiring, failing, confused, desperate, ambiguous. What a predicament!

There are some human beings who follow their innate God-given intelligence so doggedly that they become entirely angels, entirely Pure Light. These are the prophets and saints and holy ones, the Friends and true Lovers. They have been saved from both fear and hope. As the Koran says, "No fear shall walk with them, nor will they grieve."



Lightning Flash

 Your task? To work with all the passion of your being to acquire an inner light, so you escape and are safe from the fires of madness, illusion, and confusion that are, and always will be, the world.

When you have acquired this light, then every kind of power, all rank, status, and every conceivable reward the world could offer you will pass like a flash of lightning when they shine on your heart, in the same way as the fear of God and longing for the real world of holiness pass like a lightning flash when they shine on the hearts of the worldly.

If you are one of the People of God, you will be preoccupied with and absorbed by nothing but God. All worldly desires will be to you like the lusts of a man who cannot get an erection; they will not be able to take real root and will shrivel.

Go forward, knowing the Path will vanish under you
Open your arms, knowing they will burn away
Give everything you are, knowing it is nothing
Bathe always in His river, even when it's blood.




If anyone had once, even once, glimpsed Your Face of
 Lightning,
They'd spend every second stammering Your Praise.
Each moment, like the angels, they'd offer their heart to
 Your Fire,
Each moment, like the angels, they'd be reborn in You.



The sail of the ship of man's being is belief.
When there is a sail, the wind can carry him
To place after place of power and wonder.
No sail, all words are wind.

The Use of Words

 You may ask: what then is the use of words? They set you searching and excite you to search. The goal of searching can never be attained through words. If that were the case, there would be no need of so much striving and passion, prayer and longing, and constant, consistent self-annihilating before the Glory of the Face. Think of words like something moving mysteriously in the distance: you run after it, hoping to see it more clearly. You do not in any way understand it through its movement.

Human speech can excite you to seek the meaning, but it is not the meaning itself, and you do not see what is being spoken of immediately and in reality. If what all men secretly long and hunger for—the essence of essences and the light of splendor—could be knowable simply by words, you would never need to die to your false self and to suffer such distress in looking for what you do not yet know you secretly are and possess. How much you have to endure for yourself not to remain, so that you come to know that which remains forever!

The Absolute Being creates out of non-existence; what other
workshop

But non-existence could the Creator of Existence have?

Do you write over what is already written?

Do you plant a sapling where there's one growing already?

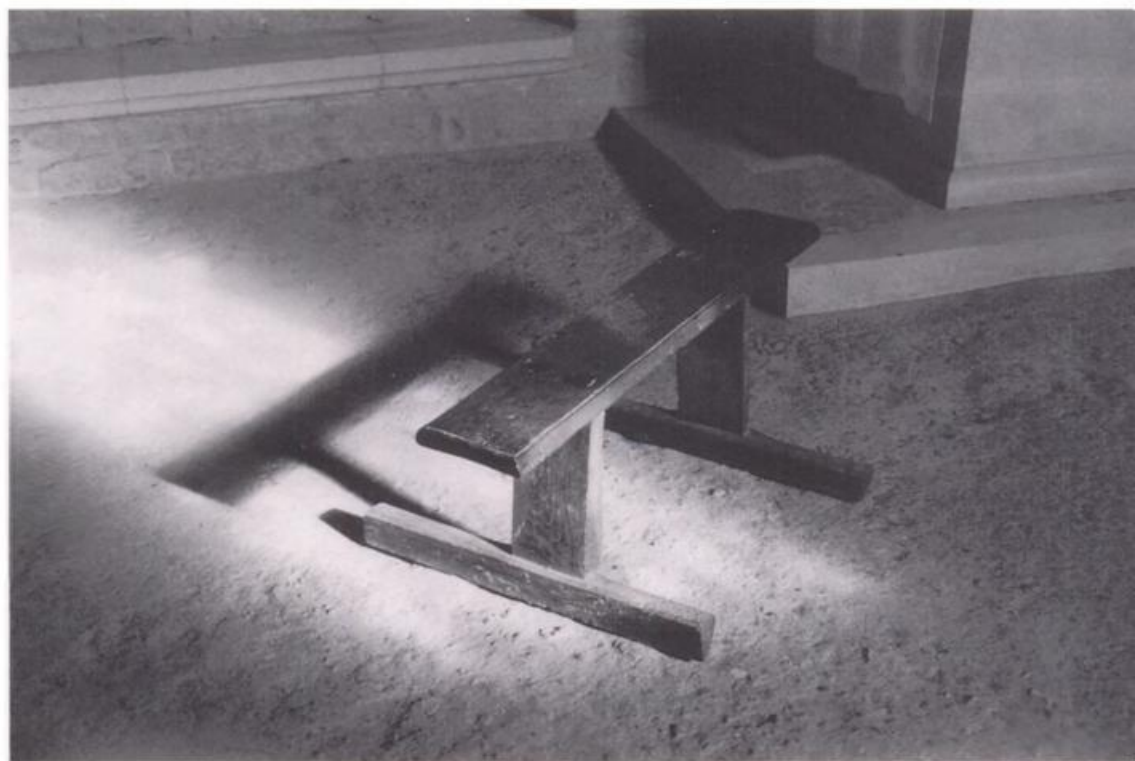
No! So look for a piece of paper no one has written on;

Search for a place where nothing has ever been sown.

Be a place unsown, a white paper no writing has stained,

So the Pen of Mercy can ennoble you, and the Merciful One

Can sow in your blindness the seed of Pure Vision.



Be Always Humble



Remember always that all mystic sciences and exercises, all passions and acts of devotion, in comparison with the real worth and majesty of God, are as if someone came to you, bowed once, performed some perfunctory little service, and then went away. If you were to put the entire earth on your heart in serving God, it would be the same as bowing your head once to the ground.

I am not trying to discourage you by saying this, only to instill in you some sense of proportion, some sense of the terrible glory of the One you love.

Do you imagine that God's beauty and worth and magnanimity did not precede your worship and service of them? Wasn't it God who made you able to worship and serve Him? Wasn't it God who gave you some tiny spark of His great passion to love Him with, some tiny flame of His eternal fire of perseverance with which to go on looking for Him? So who are any of us to boast of anything? Anything we can do, anything at all, is like making little forms out of wood and leather and taking them humbly to God, saying, "I love these little forms. I made them; but it is up to You to give them life. Give them life and these my works shall live; if you do not. . . . Everything, everything, is always up to You."

Abraham said, "God is He who gives life and He who makes to die." Nimrod said, "I am He who gives life and makes to die." What arrogance! If God wants, the sun will rise in the west and the mountains will vanish like smoke at one rush of His wind, and all the seas will dissolve in vapor and all the stars fall out of the sky into a pit of eternal darkness. This is the power and this is the infinite majesty and this is the glory of the One we are in love with. Never forget this, or you will be in danger; the path to Him is littered with the bones of those who did not remember Who they were looking for, and how great beyond all concepts and imagining He always is.



The human being is like a sack of corn. The king cries out, "Where are you taking that sack to? My cup is in it."

Most men ignore the cup, never know that it is there, being completely absorbed by the corn.

Every thought or feeling or sudden inner astonishment that draws you toward the invisible world is a reflection of the ray of that cup as its splendor flashes out.

When grace wills it, you will see that world here, you will know this world to be the Rose Garden of rose gardens, a paradise where nothing is ever born and nothing ever dies. You will realize that you and its Gardener are one love, one heart, one breath. This is the heaven He has kept for His lovers; no one arrives in it who has not been through ring after ring of fire.



O King of glory, who needs no drums or banners,
You have made me mad, and madmen live beyond law.
Look at me from a distance, I'm a stumbling fool.
What you see is fantasy only, a mist of nothing.
Step forward yourself now and dare to become nothing.
This nothing I am is the source of the soul;
The real soul, that is, not the one black with grief.
"I" without "I," "you" without "you," together
We'll dive wildly into this burning river;
There's only tyranny and misery on the earth.
You drown in this river, but don't lose your life;
This is the Water of Eternal Life, of grace and mercy.

“My Mystery will always be protected from fools,” He said. “For fools think they know, fools think they understand. Fools are never foolish enough to lose their heads for love. And who but the headless ever approach My Throne?”




You say you have seen Him, but your eyes are two stones.
You say you have known Him, but nothing in you trembles.
You still say “I” when you speak of surviving His glory;
No one who has seen It has ever survived.



Freedom, your name is Love! Love, make me your slave!
Slavery to You is the door into the Garden.
My door into eternity is exactly the shape I make
When I walk forward, headless, on my knees.


Man's Search and God's Search

 The human search is for something that has not yet been found; day and night human beings search for what they do not yet have. But the search for what has already been found and attained, and yet there is someone looking passionately for that—that is a very strange search indeed, and goes beyond what the human imagination can fathom. Man's search is for something new that he has not yet discovered; his search is for something that has been found already and is then looked for.

The search I am trying to describe is God's search. God has already found everything, and all things are found in His boundless power. "Be, and it is," the Koran says, and names God "the Finder, the Generous." God has indeed found all things, and so is well named the Finder. Yet in spite of all this God is also—and this is the marvelous mystery—the Seeker: "He is the Seeker and the One who vanquishes." What does this mean? "O man, so long as you are swept up in the search that is created in time—which is a human attribute—you find yourself far from the true goal. When your search dies away into God's search and God's searching vanquishes yours, then at last the real search begins. For you are then a seeker by virtue of the search of God Himself."

Stay close, my heart, to the one who knows your ways
Come into the shade of the tree that always has fresh flowers.
Don't stroll idly through the bazaar of the perfume-makers
Stay in the shop of the sugar-seller.
If you don't find true balance, anyone can deceive you;
Anyone can trick out a thing of straw, and make you take it for gold.
Don't squat with a bowl before every boiling pot;
In each pot on the fire you find very different things.
Not all sugarcanes have sugar, not all abysses a peak;
Not all eyes possess vision, not every sea is full of pearls.
O nightingale, with your voice of dark honey! Go on lamenting!
Only your drunken ecstasy can pierce the rock's hard heart!
Surrender yourself, and if you cannot be welcomed by the Friend,
Know that you are rebelling inwardly like a thread
That doesn't want to go through the needle's eye!
The awakened heart is a lamp; protect it by the hem of your robe!
Hurry and get out of this wind, for the weather is bad.
And when you've left this storm, you will come to a fountain;
You'll find a Friend there who will always nourish your soul.
And with your soul always green, you'll grow into a tall tree
Flowering always with sweet light-fruit, whose growth is interior.

Since I Cannot Die, You Must

 Two "I"s cannot exist in the presence of God. You say "I," He says "I." Either you will die before Him, or He will die before you, so duality shall not remain. As for God's dying, that is impossible: He is the Eternally Living One, the Deathless, the Immortal. God is so infinitely tender-hearted and so overflowing with grace that if He could die for you so that duality could vanish, He would. But that is impossible. It is up to you to die so He may reveal Himself to you and so that nothing of duality can remain.

Tie two birds together, and although they belong to the same species and have now four wings to fly with, they will not be able to. That is because duality still continues to exist. Tie a dead bird to a living one, and then both can soar easily.

Lovers of the Sun know that the Sun is so loving that it would happily die before the bat. Since this is not in any way possible, the Sun says to the bat, "O bat, My Grace is spread out over all things and all beings, from one end of the horizon to the other, under and along and across all possible worlds. With my whole heart I want to grace you also and make you deathless with My own Splendor. Since I cannot die, you must, so you can share in the Light of My Glory and be transformed from a bat to the immortal bird that lives on My Mountain."



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