Special Rumi Issue

A Heart Not Divided by Time:

M. Fethullah Gülen and Jalaluddin Rumi

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ne might note the wide-ranging wisdom, knowledge, and interests of Fethullah Gülen while at the same time asserting that he has only one double interest: God and the perfecting of the world in which God implanted humans.

In considering the diverse aspects of Gülen's approach to this double issue, one must approach the particular subject of Gülen's relationship with Jalaluddin Rumi along a series of parallel and intertwining paths. We might begin by observing what mysticism is, turning then to Rumi and his evolution—most significantly, how he became a mystic and what sort of mystic he became—and then turning to a brief discussion of Mr. Gülen's evolution toward what may be understood as a mystical perspective; before joining Gülen directly to Rumi by a series of their respective poetic and prose links.

Mysticism

Mystics believe there is a hidden innermost recess of God—the *mysterion*—that cannot be accessed through everyday prayer and worship. This belief offers a paradox within the Muslim (and Jewish) traditions: how can there be an "inner"? "Inner" implies an "outer" for God, which implies a space-occupying form, when for Islam and Judaism, God is understood to offer no physical form.

This is one of the reasons that mainstream religious leaders have often discouraged the mystical efforts of their congregations: the contradictions can destroy one's mind. Access to the *mysterion* may be understood both as "ek-stasis" (ecstasy)—stepping out of and beyond one's ordinary being-in-the-world—and as "en-stasis" (enstasy): digging deep into one's self (because there is a bit of Godness in all of us: our souls). Access may be understood as becoming one with the One—of being entirely filled with God.

In order to be filled with God, one must empty one's self of *self*. The challenge of self-emptying is doubled by returning to a condition in which one's self is present—otherwise, one will be dead, mad, or an apostate. Selflessness means that one undertakes the enterprise not to become enlightened—to gain something for one's own being—because that would be too self-centered. One's goal must be to become enlightened to help improve the community around one (whether one's dozen followers or all of humanity, or somewhere in-between)—a selfless goal. The third challenge is to communicate what has transpired to others. Famously, as Muhammad Ibn al'Hallaj (d.922) returned from a state of mystical ecstasy, he could not disentangle himself from Godness. He began to exclaim, "*Anna al-Haqq*!": "I am the Truth!"—one of God's 99 names. So, he was exclaiming, "I am God!"—not in the egotistic sense but because he was still so filled with God that he and God remained one. He was executed as an apostate.

"The challenge of self-emptying is doubled by returning to a condition in which one's self is present—otherwise, one will be dead, mad, or an apostate."

There is a further positive potential consequence of the mystical experience: that in being emptied of self, of ego, the mystic may and most often does come to recognize that the notion that there is only one correct mode of engaging God is the ego speaking and not God.

The mystic is inclined to abandon the conviction that "only Islam, or only Christianity, or only Judaism—or my understanding of Islam; my understanding of Christianity; my understanding of Judaism—offers the only correct path to engaging God." This does not mean that my form of faith is not the most perfect for me; it means that I recognize that other forms of faith may be equally perfect for others—like endlessly different yet equally perfect leaves, trees, snowflakes, and human beings.

Rumi's Universalism

One indeed finds this sensibility expressed in *Jalaluddin* ("The Glory of the Religion") Rumi's poetry, again and again. Rumi was born on Sept 30, 1207, and lived in a most turbulent era. The thirteen century was marked by significant political upheavals in the Muslim world of the Middle East, most obviously the overturning of the Fatimid domination of Egypt and its environs by the Mamluk dynasty in 1250 and, within Rumi's ambit, the final collapse of the Abbasid dynasty and the overrunning of its capital, Baghdad, by the Mongols, in 1258. It was also marked by the last century of the Christian-Muslim conflicts known as the Crusades.

His birthplace was Balkh, Afghanistan (part of the Khwarezmid Persian Empire), and he is called *Jalaluddin Balkhi* by Persians and Afghanis. He is better known as "Rumi," whose designation is derived from "Roman," for he and his father fled into what was called "Roman" Anatolia during the first wave of Mongol invasions (ca 1218-20) that virtually destroyed Balkh in 1219. His mother is said to have been among those slain by the invaders;[1] he and his father came to Konya, Turkey, around 1220.[2]

[1] Others (notably Ibrahim Gamard in his Rumi and Islam) have asserted that his mother died in Laranda (present-day Karaman, Turkey), not far from Rum, and therefore, presumably well after the family departed from Balkh.

[2] As the capital of the Seljuks of Rum ("Roman Anatolia") from 1071 through 1243, Konya was also called Rum.

"..."Rumi"...is derived from "Roman," for he and his father fled into what was called "Roman" Anatolia during the first wave of Mongol invasions..."

Rumi's father, Baha ad-Din Walad, was a well-known theologian and jurist whose reputation was sufficient for him to establish a successful school wherever he landed. From Balkh, the first significant stopping point for father and son was Nishapur, the hometown of the renowned Sufi poet Farid ad-Din 'Attar. 'Attar is said to have sensed the impending spiritual greatness of the young Rumi and presented him with a copy of his Asrarname, which, it is said, Rumi always kept with him. Indeed, one of Rumi's better-known turns of phrase in his Divan-i-Kabir asserts, "'Attar was the spirit, and Sani was his two eyes. We came into the realm of truth after 'Attar and Sanai, following their footsteps."

From Nishapur, father and his son moved on to Baghdad, followed the route of the holy *hajj* (pilgrimage) to Madina and Makka, returned north, through Jerusalem to Damascus, and by way of other cities to Larende (now known as Karaman). The local ruler, Amir Musa Bey, built a new madrasa complex where Baha ad-Din lived and began to teach. Here, as in virtually all the places they passed, the young Rumi attended his father's lectures, heard his father's sermons, and studied a range of other scholars, deepening his grasp of the details of Islamic theology and jurisprudence.

A year after his father died in early 1231, he found a spiritual guide, Sayyid Burhad ad-Din, a shaikh within the Kubrawiyyah Sufi *tariqa* (path),[3] who eventually advised him to go back to Aleppo and Damascus to study further. Rumi spent two years studying Islamic jurisprudence in Aleppo, in a Halwiyye madrasa, then in Damascus in a Maqdisiyyah madrasa for more than four years. This was when Ibn 'Arabi, a consummate master of Sufi thought, was also in Damascus—the last four years of Ibn 'Arabi's life there coincided with Rumi's time there, and they likely met.

[3] This word comes to be used to refer to Sufi orders. Each "order" offers a particular path to the *mysterion*.

By 1240, Rumi had become recognized as a master of orthodox scholarship. Four years later—occasioned by the arrival of a Sufi named Shams of Tabriz, whose eccentric behavior attracted great attention and whom the young scholar embraced instead of shunning as others did. The first time they met, Shams posed a question to Rumi that threw the young scholar off. Tradition maintains that Shams asked: "Who is greater, the Prophet Muhammad or the Turkish mystic Beyazit Bistami, since Bistami asserted "How great is my glory!"[4] whereas Muhammad acknowledged, in a prayer to God, that "we do not know You as we should." Rumi is said to have fainted. Recovering, he asserted that Muhammad was the greater, for while Bistami had swallowed one enormous gulp of God and stopped there, for Muhammad, the tariqa was constantly and continuously unfolding with new nuances and aspects.

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The dialogue that ensued between Rumi and Shams made them inseparable companions in the search for greater intimacy with God. For this narrative, what is most important is that Rumi gradually abandoned his life as a teacher of jurisprudence and emerged as a teacher and writer on Muslim mysticism: Sufism. The well-respected Orthodox scholar of 1240 became a renowned Sufi master by 1248—attracting followers into what evolved as his own *tariqa*. Due to the Turkish version of his Sufi name, that *tariqa* is known as *Mawlawīyah Tariqa*: the Mevlevi Order. The *Mawlawīyah Tariqa* became marked by a unique *dhikr*—the initiation of the process of seeking the *mysterion*—in which devotees not only whirl with increasing speed in concentric circles but learn to whirl around individually for extended periods, with absolute, perfect equilibrium, so that they are able both to start and to stop abruptly and without a scintilla of balance unease.

[4] Bistami's "my" refers not to himself but to God since he is entirely empty of self and filled with God in his ecstatic condition.

With one hand pointing down and one up, each whirling dervish (pupil) is a connector of heaven to earth, a microcosm of perfectly centered reality, of close-eyed inner sight, a still, silent, yet ever-moving, rustling access-seeker of the divine *mysterion*.

Rumi undertook his final *hijrah*, his final migration to the world of eternity—a phrase far more apt than one that speaks of his death—on December 17, 1273. His literary legacy includes the massive six-volume *Mesnevi*—consisting of 25,618 couplets—the *Divan i-Kabir*, *Fihi Ma Fih*, *Majalis-i Sab'a* and the *Maktubat*; other works are ascribed to him by some, but these are the works universally accepted as his.[5] Throughout his writings one finds ample expressions of the *universalistic* and *panhenotheistic*[6] sensibility that make Rumi a consummate example of that aspect of mystical thought—arguably the preeminent exponent of God's universal, as opposed to *Islamocentric* (or any other sort of *–centric*) focus.

One way Rumi expresses this is by inclusive references to the prophets—the messengers, the *Rasuls*—reverenced in prior Abrahamic traditions, presented in his poetry no less reverentially than the Prophet Muhammad. Thus

> *… Spring is Christ,*
> *raising martyred plants from their shrouds….*
>
> *…This wind is the Holy Spirit.*
> *The trees are Mary.*
> *Watch how husband and wife play subtle games with their hands….*

[5] There are variant spellings and titles for the first two of these works that are Rumi's most substantial. Thus "*Mesnevi*" will also be found as "*Mathnawi*," usually depending upon whether the source is Persian or Turkish; and the *Divan-i Kabir* is also called the *Divan-i Shamsi Tabriz*, named for Rumi's great friend and mystical inspiration, Shams of Tabriz.

[6] Take note: not *pantheistic*—gods everywhere—but *pan* (in everything) *heno* (the one) *theos* (God). Thus, not only in every human being but throughout all of nature: all of God's creation.

…The scent of Joseph's shirt comes to Jacob.
A red carnelian of Yemeni laughter is heard
by Muhammad in Mecca.

(Divan-i Shamsi Tabriz, #2003)

Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary, and the Israelite patriarchs Jacob and Joseph share the same territory with the founder of Islam. There are other, even more forceful ways in which he expresses interfaith solidarity. Thus, neither the love of God by the mystic nor the love of the mystic by God is confinable to one mode of conceiving God and God's message and one method of accessing God in God's hiddenmost recesses. For

[t]he creed of love transcends the specific creeds of the different religions.
We do not need to define true religion by statements of belief.
We need only to say that we are lovers of God.

(Mesnevi II, #1770)

Rumi broadens his articulation of this principle by way of a parable regarding Moses in conversation with God, in the heart of which,

… a sudden revelation
came then to Moses. God's voice:

…Ways of worshipping are not to be ranked as better
or worse than one another.

Hindus do Hindu things.
The Dravidian Muslims in India do what they do.
It's all praise, and it's all right.

…That broken-open lowliness is the reality,
not the language! Forget phraseology/ I want burning, burning…

The love-religion has no code or doctrine.
Only God…

(Mesnevi II, #1750)

And elsewhere the poet asserts that

…[e]very holy person seems to have a different doctrine
and practice, but there's really only one work.

(Divan-i Shamsi Tabriz, #258)

And that

[a]ll religions, all this singing is one song.
The differences are just illusion and vanity.

(Rumi: The Big Red Book by Coleman Barks)

There are many more passages strewn throughout Mevlana's work that capture the essential idea that the number of potential paths to God—for the mystic at least, who seeks an intense oneness with God—is virtually infinite, that the Creator loves and values all of Its creation, rather than favoring one species, or one group within the human species. Indeed, essential to the mystical experience is the idea that the mystic seeking God's *mysterion*, as a lover seeks his beloved, is, in fact, also the beloved sought by God, the ultimate and eternal Lover:

A lover seeks his beloved;
but he also wants his beloved to seek him.
God seeks every human being,
but He also wants human beings to seek Him.
(Mesnevi III, #4393-4)

Thus motivated, the lover/mystic solves what has been called "the seducer's paradox." For the seducer wishes to contrive a situation in which the one he desires ends up desiring him: the one he wishes to seduce ends up seducing him. When the mystic seeks God's innermost core, God has succeeded in solving that seducer's paradox, turning His beloved into a lover and God Itself, the ultimate Lover, into the Beloved.[7]

While many other passages throughout Rumi's works offer a range of expressions of both universalistic thinking and love between the mystic and God, for our purposes, this handful of instances will suffice to demonstrate the point.[8] We turn, instead, to consider how the contemporary scholar, teacher, and social advocate, Fethullah Gülen (b.1938), is among the foremost contemporary articulators of these principles and ideas. To begin with, the Center for Faith, Identity, and Globalization's December 2022 special issue was devoted to an extensive and perceptive article on Rumi by Mr. Gülen—a significant demonstration of Gülen's intellectual and spiritual relationship to Rumi.

"...*[as a]* contemporary scholar, teacher, and social advocate, Fethullah Gülen (b.1938), is among the foremost contemporary articulators of these principles and ideas."

[7] The seducer's paradox Is first articulated intellectually in the image of Plato's Socrates, who wishes to seduce young men's minds through dialogue and is frequently shown being "forced" into the very discussion he wants. This is most clear in The Republic, in which, at the outset, a group of young men "threaten" Socrates with violence if he refuses to come with them to the house of Kephalos to partake in a discussion.

[8] For more information, as well as more details regarding the remainder of this article, see *Embracing the World* by Ori Z. Soltes (2013).

Fethullah Gülen and Rumi

Fethullah Gülen was born in Erzurum into a family of limited means. His father was an imam who spent much of his time reading and reflecting on the shape of the early Islamic world. He enjoyed reciting poetry and was an important early inspirer of his son, both as a lover of learning and as one impassioned with the stories and teachings of Muhammad and his inner circle, the *rashidun*. So, too, Gülen's mother, a teacher of the Qur'an, instilled in him a love of recitation from the sacred text—she began to teach him how to recite the Qur'an when he was four years old.

Gülen was educated along traditional Islamic lines—he became a *hafiz*, one who knows the entire Qur'an by heart, by age twelve; and he began to preach in local mosques as a fourteen-year-old—and also along modern lines, beginning a life-long series of intellectual and spiritual interests that extend from the Qur'an and hadith to the literature of other religious traditions as well as to math and the sciences. His study encompassed the history of Islam and its contributions over an extended period to math and science and not only to Abrahamic spirituality.

"*[Gülen]*'s study encompassed the history of Islam and its contributions over an extended period to math and science and not only to Abrahamic spirituality."

Aside from his formally obtained, government-mandated teaching certificate in Islamic learning, Gülen became part of the training circles of local Sufi sheiks, with their focus both on deep—mystical—spirituality and on a universalist, broadly humanistic perspective concerning faith. A centerpiece of such study that would emerge for him as an interest and an influence was Jalaluddin Rumi, as well as other key Sufi thinkers.[9]

[9] There were also many non-Sufis whose thoughts attracted Gülen, from Socrates and Plato to Bediuzzaman Said Nursi to Einstein. However, our focus here is limited almost entirely to his relationship with Rumi.

By 1958, Gülen had taken and passed the formal examinations administered by the Turkish State's Directorate of Religious Affairs, thus allowing him to serve officially as an imam, preacher, and teacher. His first appointment was to a mosque in Edirne, near Istanbul, on the European side of Turkey. There, he lived modestly—indeed ascetically—as he continued his self-directed course of diverse studies while quickly developing a reputation throughout the city as an outstanding preacher. He developed a web of friends and followers from varied walks of life through his charismatic personality and the diversity and depth of his learning.

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His move to Izmir in 1966 coincided with the further broadening of his audience: He did not merely preach Friday sermons from the minbar but conducted discussions that focused on questions and concerns relating to everyday life to which Islam, linked to contemporary thought, can offer answers. His knowledge and psychological acuity combined to develop his reputation further and expand his following.

At the same time, over the next several years, he began with greater and greater clarity to encircle his preaching and the discussions he led with a call to action centered on serving others: *Hizmet* (the Turkish term for "service"). He spoke not only in the mosque but in coffee shops, where he could engage young people, pushing them to think about the future of the world and their role in shaping it. He pushed them to recognize the importance of interweaving intellectual awareness with spiritually grounded virtue and altruistic service toward others, helping to foster a generation grounded in the conviction that such service most fully serves the self. He emphasized how each "self" is connected to all "selves" and thus that helping others and helping to improve the world benefits the one helping.

"*[Gülen]* emphasized how each "self" is connected to all "selves" and thus that helping others and helping to improve the world benefits the one helping."

Gülen increasingly inspired Turkish youth to act toward shaping a peaceful world, not a violent one, fraught not with ego-centric politics but with service to society at large. He traveled widely, visiting countless cities, towns, and villages across Turkey, not only giving sermons in mosques but also speeches and lectures in coffee houses and lecture halls. Talks became dialogues; speaking never outpaced listening, as he sought both the pulse of the Turkish people and a means of influencing that pulse toward a calmer, more *Hizmet*-driven beat. His words were recorded by followers and distributed on tape; he was among a handful of imams recognized nationwide by the decade's end. He encouraged the development of more effective educational facilities and worked to provide education access to more young people, including those without the means to pursue schooling; he inspired the building of institutions and organized scholarship-granting entities.

This also led, to some extent, to fear of him on the part of the secular government.[10] He ultimately retired in 1980 from his formal position as an imam. By then, his following had expanded exponentially. By the 1980s, an extensive network of Gülen-inspired groups of educators and entrepreneurs began an extended program of establishing schools—by now, several hundred of them both within and beyond Turkey.

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[10] To be clear, Gülen has never opposed the government by actions or non-actions. However, he has been misunderstood, misinterpreted, and perceived as heretical from diverse sides of the political/religious fence. The secularists have feared that he sought to transform Turkey into another Iran, and the Islamists have resented his emergence as a prominent advocate of interfaith dialogue.

Private institutions, these schools offered—and continue to offer—an incomparable opportunity for their students; they abided by the strictures demanded by the state but extended well beyond those strictures to offer curricula wedding tradition to modernity and interweaving a focus on the intellect with an interest in the soul and a recognition of the importance of the body for those who would become fully contributing members of society.

By 1991, Gülen decided that his role as an inspirer of the *Hizmet Movement*, through preaching and teaching, had gone as far as necessary—or perhaps as far as it could—as a primary mode of encouraging such actions. He retired from public life to devote his time in a quieter way to the community: teaching seminars for graduate students and participating in service projects. He continued to travel to meet with diverse religious and political world leaders who shared his vision of a better world—from Israel's Chief Sephardic Rabbi, Eliyahu Bakshi Doron, to Pope John Paul II. He became increasingly available for interviews and commentaries in the various media to promote the ideas of *Hizmet* and peaceful coexistence across the broad range of ethnicities, religions, races, and nationalities that define the spectrum of humanity.

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Promoting interfaith dialogue became a central element in his thinking—incorporating the most forward-looking features of Muslim tradition about embracing non-Muslims to contemporary reality. Above all, he expanded the range of his writing projects, making his ideas on intra-Muslim spiritual matters and interfaith and multicultural issues available to a broad audience.

His profound interest in a treble weave—of love of traditional Muslim thought with a passion for contemporary scientific thought; of intra-Islamic concerns with an embrace of genuine interfaith dialogue; and of an insistence that such love, passion, concern, and embrace lead one to serve others—marks his most enduring contribution during the past three decades as a writer and activist. It is the relationship between this contribution and that of those who preceded him, particularly Jalaluddin Rumi, which forms the foundation of his perspective: that the world can only be improved if all of us, regardless of faith, ethnicity, race, gender, or nationality, work together without regard for denominational lines.

Gülen resonates with Rumi's emphasis on divine and human love when he turns toward Islam and beyond Islam about understanding and misunderstanding God within and beyond the world in which we live and the love that binds it together:

> Love is the reason for existence and its essence, and it is the strongest tie that binds creatures together. Everything in the universe is the handiwork of God. Thus, if you do not approach humanity, a creation of God, with love, you will have hurt those who love God and those whom God loves… …[O]ur approach to creation and other human beings should be based on loving them for the sake of their Creator.[11]

He adds, in prescribing *Hizmet* to others—without expecting recompense except for the satisfaction of mirroring God in God's love for creation—as an ideal way of life:

> [a]ltruism is an exalted human feeling, and its course is love. Whoever has the greatest share in this love is the greatest hero of humanity; these people have been able to uproot any feelings of hatred and rancor in themselves. Such heroes of love continue to live even after their death…[12]

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[11] "Making the Atmosphere of Tolerance Permanent, in Section Two ("Forgiveness, Tolerance, and Dialogue") of *Love and Tolerance*, 96. One could spend many pages on Gülen's anti-violence and anti-terrorism, but his stances are almost too obvious—given his discussions of love and compassion—to require extended reference.

[12] "Love," in Section One ("Love and Mercy") of *Love and Tolerance*, 35.

"...*[Gülen prescribes] Hizmet* to others—without expecting recompense except for the satisfaction of mirroring God in God's love for creation—as an ideal way of life."

Compassion for others leads to what Gülen calls "tolerance." In general, that word, in English, suggests an unequal nuance of one party speaking from a higher level regarding a second party, as opposed to referring to an even surface in which equals embrace equals. However, in the context in which Gülen uses the term, first of all, its Turkish equivalent (and after all, Gülen writes in Turkish)—*hoşgörü*—offers a more positive nuance ("seeing the world from within someone else's eyes") so that we are in fact dealing with a level-field intention, suggesting "embrace." He refers to the full acceptance—and love—of diversely-configured humanity. This full-hearted embrace that his contexts make clear is what he finds in the Qur'an as a guide and what he follows as the path forged by Rumi and others. Thus, he intends the term to be understood in opposition to the term "intolerant" so that it does not merely stand on its own as a concept but is specifically intended to be the anti-concept of intolerance. Early on, in a selection from his teachings and published in 1996, he commented:

> Be so tolerant that your bosom becomes wide like the ocean. Become inspired with faith and love of human beings. Let there be no troubled souls to whom you do not offer a hand.[13]

We may recognize in these words a resonance with words that we have noted in Rumi's writings: that of a universal embrace of humanity, as opposed to a sectarian approach to human relations. We find Rumian echoes in Gülen's comment that:

> There are as many roads to God as there are creatures. God leads those who struggle for His sake to salvation on one or more of these roads…[14]

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[13] "Tolerance," in *Criteria or the Lights of the Way*, 19.

[14] "Lesser and Greater Jihad," in Section Five ("Jihad—Terrorism and Human Rights") of *Love and Tolerance*, 279.

Because of God's omnipresence within creation and all of its creatures and the endless ways in which God may be refracted within them, in partaking of that one, endlessly refractable God, all creatures are and do what they are and do. However, Gülen differs from Rumi in the specific ways in which he addresses the subject of dialogue as a desideratum and a necessity—for the world of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries is a vaster one, in which communication across that vastness is virtually instantaneous, as compared with the thirteenth-century world through which Rumi moved—so Gülen recognizes the complications that attend interdenominational dialogue today.

As much as Rumi's world was the world that culminated two centuries of Crusader conflict between Christians and Muslims, Gülen's world is a world much of which still remembers those events but in which more unhappy events have taken place in the course of the many intervening centuries. Moreover, other influential thinkers have had an impact on Gülen. Nevertheless, his interest resonates particularly with Rumi's interest: to help shape a universalist civilization in which each particular sectarian part enjoys a strong sense of its own identity and a love of and compassion toward others with their own identities.

"...Rumi's world...culminated two centuries of Crusader conflict between Christians and Muslims, [while] Gülen's...is a world...in which more unhappy events have taken place in the course of the many intervening centuries. "

Gülen explicitly recognizes the universalism that defined Rumi, writing that

> [h]e was and continues to be one who beckons, one whose powerful voice invited everyone to the truth and the ultimate blessed reality. Rumi was an inclusive master whose joy was a direct consequence of His [God's] joy, whose love and passion were the result of His [God's] special favors to Rumi… His heart was full of the Divine Light…. His inner eyes were enlightened by this special light.[15]

[15] M. Fethullah Gülen, "Foreword," in *Fundamentals of Rumi's Thought*, x.

Rumi is part of the continuum of Sufi thinkers, from Rabia' and her emphasis on love to 'Attar whom Rumi met when still an adolescent in his father's retinue, to Ibn' Arabi whom young Rumi may well have met in Damascus, as Gülen (among others) suggests.[16] Rumi is also a source of key divergences from that continuum. This divergence comes most obviously in Rumi's new and different mode of *dhikr*.

As a fervent Muslim, Gülen sees within the Turkey of the past a soul deeply informed by its long-held Muslim identity and the best of the values put forth by Muhammad, the *rashidun* and early caliphs, the Qur'an and the *hadith* as he has studied and expounded and interpreted them over the many decades of his love affair with his tradition. He is simultaneously a universalist in the mold shaped by Rumi, embracing the world. There is a paradox but no contradiction in his vision of a Turkey defined by both a Muslim and a universalist identity.

Dialogues found in and leading toward love, compassion, and *hoşgörü* among diverse groups representing diverse faiths, nations, and ethnicities, furthering the fundamental idea that we fulfill the divine intention for us when we serve each other—that serving each other is serving God, even for those who are not sure that they believe in God—is the starting point with which Gülen expands beyond where Socrates explicitly sought to carry Athens-limited dialogue.

Gülen's life's work has been no less than an extended expounding upon the words for which Rumi is perhaps best known:

> Come, come wherever you are.
> Wanderer, worshipper, lover of leaving, it doesn't matter…
>
> Come, come and join us, as we are the people of love devoted to God!
> Come, come through the door of love and join us and sit with us.
> Come, let us speak one to another through our hearts.

[16] Gülen writes how Rumi, staying "some time in Damascus,…met many pious persons, such as Ibn al-'Arabi" in his foreword to Shefik Can's *Fundamentals of Rumi's Thought*, xiv.

> Let us speak secretly, without ears and eyes. Let us laugh together
> without lips or sound, let us laugh like the roses. Like thought,
> let us see each other without any words or sounds. Since all are
> the same, let us call each other from our hearts, we won't use
> our lips or tongue. As our hands are clasped together,
> let us talk about it.[17]

Gülen has spent the better part of his life talking about it. What has changed over time is that his interlocutors have been an ever-expanding group. His life of dialogue extends from the Izmir of his own time to the Athens of the time of Socrates—by going steadily eastward, through Konya and Balkh toward the rising sun, to encompass the entire world.

In the article published as the inaugural Special Rumi Issue in December 2022 by the Center for Faith, Identity and Globalization, Gülen noted, among other things, that "throughout his life, Rumi witnessed and experienced many difficulties. Yet he never acted in a harsh manner or tried to hurt others in response. While proclaiming the bounties of God, Rumi roared and was fearless. In his personal engagements, he was always meek and humble, willing and ready to embrace everyone with great compassion." I can imagine few individuals in our own time who exemplify these traits more completely than Fethullah Gülen, who is both a scholar who has engaged Rumi throughout his career on intellectual and spiritual levels and who inspires altruistic *Hizmet* to humanity—whose way of being in the world echoes with Rumi-like rhythms and harmonies.

[17] From the Rumi quote in Gülen's essay "Love for Humankind," in Section One ("Love and Mercy") of *Love and Tolerance*, 40-1.

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About CFIG

The Center for Faith, Identity, and Globalization (CFIG) is the interdisciplinary research and publication unit of Rumi Forum. CFIG contributes to the knowledge and research at the intersection of faith, identity, and globalization by generating academically-informed analyses and facilitating scholarly exchanges. CFIG's spectrum of themes will cover contemporary subjects that are relevant to our understanding of the connection between faith, identity, and globalization, such as interfaith engagement, religious nationalism, conflict resolution, globalization, religious freedom, and spirituality.

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