

light, because he is immersed in the reflection of the divine light, can be a valid spiritual guide.

The mystical metaphysic of light contained in the *Miṣbāḥ* is based upon a thorough Anqarawian analysis of the Qur'ān. This not only provides an interpretation of Revelation – of the tradition of Prophecy, in other words – but also includes the traditions of Sufi masters and especially of the Illuminationist (*Ishrāqī*) school of mystical philosophy. In this impressive edition of the *Lamp of Mysteries*, Prof. Kuşpınar presents us with a reliable Arabic text as well as an excellent English translation that reveals the mystical essence of an emanation of enlightenment. Readers will find this work very rewarding indeed, not only for its high standards of academic research and publication but also for the elevated nature of its spiritual teachings.



William C. Chittick, *In Search of the Lost Heart: Explorations in Islamic Thought*. Edited by Mohammed Rustom, Atif Khalil and Kazuyo Murata. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2012. xiv, 397 pages.

Reviewed by Muhammad Isa Waley

The past forty years have seen tremendous changes in the study and perception of the West of Islam and Islamicate culture. While it is true that political developments have led to a perceived imperative to investigate the roots of religiosity-based extremism and what is often termed 'fundamentalism', the intellectual climate of postmodernism and the continuing decline in adherence to once normative Christian beliefs have enabled a broader and more profound perspective to emerge. Among the academics who have played a notable role in this process have been two leading professors – Seyyed Hossein Nasr and the late Annemarie Schimmel – and a number of their foremost students. A protégé of Nasr and a student of both, William Chittick, a professor at the State University of New York, Stony Brook, is arguably the most distinguished member of this cohort. The depth and versatility of his writing are amply demonstrated in the present selection of twenty-six essays and studies.

The contents of *In Search of the Lost Heart* are divided into four sections: 'Sufism and the Islamic Tradition', 'Ibn al-'Arabī and his Influence', 'Islamic Philosophy', and 'Reflections on Contemporary Issues' – the latter including 'The Metaphysical Roots of War and Peace', 'Harmony with the Cosmos', and observations on aspects of *tawhīd* or unity in Islam and other religions. A feature that the selected writings share is that they are pitched at a level that appears highly accessible to non-specialists. This review will, for obvious reasons, concentrate chiefly upon those essays that are most relevant to the study of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and those around him, while touching briefly on a handful of others.

In Part 1, 'Sufism and the Islamic Tradition', an examination of 'The Pluralistic Vision of Persian Sufi Poetry' (pp. 43–49) refers in part to the famous *tarjī-band* or strophic poem by Hātif Iṣfahānī on the theme of *tawhīd*, Divine Unity. Beyond the purely dogmatic level, there is a more profound *tawhīd*, which seeks and establishes a unity between such apparent opposites as the Divine *Jalāl* and *Jamāl* – the Attributes pertaining respectively to Majesty and Rigour and to Beauty and Mercy. For the Sufi poets, Chittick tells us, Love alone is able to bring together such contradictory qualities and reinstate them in God's unity. 'The use of the word love (*ishq*) in preference to others shows that this reinstatement can only be achieved by the transformation of the soul, not simply by theorizing and theologizing.' In the opinion of this reviewer, this statement serves to sum up one of the main underlying messages of this important book, the title of which also suggests as much. For 'As for love, it welcomes whatever comes from God, be it roses or thorns' – though it might be more precise to say that love welcomes the thorns that accompany the roses. At this point, Mawlānā Rūmī himself is quoted in support of the author's argument: 'Pains are an alchemy . . .' (see p. 46).

Chittick proceeds to enlarge on the divergences of perspective that arise from regarding the 'kernel' and the 'husk' of religion. There is no simplistic dismissal of the husk's necessity, for:

None can find the kernel, which is the realm of peace, harmony, wholeness and mercy, without taking the husk into account . . . It is important to make the right choices, and to do so we need . . . prophets and their messages . . . Many of the Sufi authorities were extremely concerned with the husk – make no mistake about

that! There are numerous prose treatises written by Sufis detailing the differences between right and wrong activity and explaining the necessity of distinguishing between true and false teachings.

Then again, 'Sufi poetry . . . is a celebration of love, a hymn to unity and union, a song of rejoicing that invites the listener to taste the eternal wine. It is not a place for making divisions, but rather for revelling in the universal presence of God.'

The next essay (pp. 49–55) introduces us to 'The Real Shams-i Tabrizī'. As William Chittick explains, only since the publication in 1990 of Dr Muvahhid's critical edition (a tremendous scholarly achievement, incidentally) of Shams's *Maqālāt* or *Discourses* have his life, personality, and teachings begun to receive serious attention and study. Before then, this extraordinary man had been 'stereotyped' as a wild, antinomian dervish, wholly unsociable if not downright anti-social. The reality is more complex, although it is true that it is difficult to read more than a few pages of the *Maqālāt* without encountering what appear to be outrageous utterances about other people and outlandish arrogant claims of spiritual pre-eminence.

Here is an example: 'I am not one of those who go around to meet someone . . . If God were to greet me ten times, I wouldn't answer. After the tenth time, I'd say, "and to You too". I'd make myself deaf!' Shams also fiercely and unhesitatingly denounced those Sufis and shaykhs whom he regarded as failing to live up to the standards of their calling. 'The speech of the lovers has an awesomeness. I'm talking about the love that is true, the seeking that is true. I wouldn't give you the dirt off an old shoe of a true lover for the "lovers" and "shaykhs" of these days.'

Then again, Chittick explains, Shams's veneration of the Sunna of the Prophet is such that the only acceptable attitude, in his view, is *mutā-ba'a*, or strict adherence; this term alludes to the Divine Command to the Prophet (Qur'ān, III: 31): 'Say, "If you truly love God then follow me (*fa-ttabi'ūnī*) and God will love you.'" Interestingly – and distinctively – the concept of the Sunna here embraces the inward as well as the outward aspects of worship: for example, performing the ritual prayer not only with the prescribed pronunciation and movements, but also with presence of heart and with sincerity. As Shams puts it: 'What is meant by this "meditation" is the presence of the sincere dervish – an

act of worship in which there is no false show whatsoever. Certainly that is better than outward worship without presence.'

Likewise, Shams's oft-voiced criticisms of outward religious learning apply to learning acquired with insincere intentions, for prestige and/or wealth:

Why do you study knowledge for the sake of worldly mouthfuls?
This rope is for people to come out of the well, not to go from this well into that well. You must bind yourself to knowing this: 'Who am I? What substance am I? Where am I going? Whence is my root? At this time what am I doing? Toward what have I turned my face?'

Shams-i Tabriz's understanding of Qur'ānic verses also receives attention. According to Chittick, he is summing up the spiritual path when he says, by way of commentary on Qur'ān, XLVII:19: *Know, then, that there is no God but He*: This is a commandment for knowledge. *And ask forgiveness for your sin*: This is a commandment to negate this existence, because it is newly arrived. How can this existence, which is newly arrived, see the knower of eternity?

Now, in the above passages one does see instances of a flaw that appears from time to time in the translations produced by this remarkable scholar, who moreover has a certain genius for making complex and insubstantial matters relatively easy to grasp. That flaw is a tendency towards excessive literalness, which may render the original less easy to understand, not more. 'Toward what have I turned my face?' is metaphorical and means, more or less, 'What am I basically concerned with?' And the force of the rhetorical question at the end of the hermeneutical passage just quoted depends entirely upon the contrast between the terms *hādīth* (literally 'newly arrived', but here clearly metaphysical in connotation and signifying 'originated in time') and *abadī* (eternal without end). What justification can there be for this choice in translation, when the task at hand is to introduce us to Shams's form of dialectic?

Nonetheless, readers of *In Search of the Lost Heart* have ample reason to be thankful to William Chittick for having undertaken the daunting task of translating the *Maqālāt* in their entirety and also for providing this valuable introduction to their author. Of the chapters forming the second section of the book, devoted to aspects of Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī, we may here single out for passing mention an

excellent short 'History of the Term *Wahdat al-Wujūd*', which mentions six different understandings of an expression that, although never used by al-Shaykh al-Akbar himself, has become of key importance in the interpretation and misinterpretation of his teachings.

Of more particular interest to the readers of this review is Chittick's provocative study of 'The Question of Ibn al-'Arabī's "Influence" on Rūmī' (pp. 89–99). The decision to tackle this question arose, the author informs us, from the popularity of certain writers' purported English translations of Mawlānā Rūmī's poetry – 'the Rūmī boom'. Asked about the quality of these renderings, Chittick replies that most, though not all, are 'inaccurate and inept', and that while they 'often display sparks of Rūmī's fire' they fail to convey both the literal meaning and the deeper implications of what the poet is saying. They are therefore 'lame' – a word that recalls for Chittick this line by our poet: 'The leg of the reasoners is lame/a wooden leg is awfully unsteady!' To think of such translators as representing 'reason' is slightly eccentric. The main point, however, is that here Mawlānā is not attacking rational thinking but rather the notion that the exercise of reason alone is sufficient for reaching the ultimate goal of human life, which is self-transcendence. And that is something that cannot be achieved without 'the transforming fire of love'.

At this point, interestingly and salutarily, Prof. Chittick changes tack and shows that although some authorities have argued that intellect and reason are not of great importance and value to Rūmī, this opinion is erroneous. But there is a vital distinction between 'the partial intellect' and 'the universal intellect':

The intellect, Rūmī tells us, was created from the same light as the angels . . . Although illumined by angelic light, the partial intellect is blinded by the pride and self-interest of the human ego . . . If seekers of God are to escape ignorance, delusion, and egocentricity, they must find the light of the Universal Intellect, which becomes embodied in the outside world as the Angel Gabriel. It is Gabriel who brings God's revelations to the prophets in the first place, and it is he who guides them and their followers on the path that takes them back to God.

Now, two distinct forms of knowledge are required on this path: not only rational understanding, but also visionary knowledge. How, then,

is the 'proper understanding of things . . . essential to human well-being' normatively articulated?

The primary focus of the Muslim philosophers is to describe the three fundamental domains of reality. These are God, the universe, and the human soul . . . Metaphysics deals with ultimate Reality, cosmology addresses the state of the universe from its beginning to its end, and psychology explains the origin and destiny of the human soul.

But although all three of these terms continue to be used, as practised today they 'have little if anything to do with what was being discussed in Rūmī's time, whether in the Islamic world or [elsewhere]'. As Chittick says, there is often an assumption in even the best of scholarship (and, one might add, in most translations) that all the medieval ideas can safely be ignored; these, it is believed, have now been proved to be false, and in any case Rūmī was 'speaking about love, not about systematic, rationalistic knowledge . . . This might have had some justification if the interpreters were not themselves deeply rooted in a different view of the world . . . profoundly antagonistic to almost everything that Rūmī held as self-evidently true.' Now, the human heart or spirit cannot be compartmentalized, and 'You cannot love what you do not know . . . If we do not understand the world and ourselves as we are, we will not be able to know God as He is, and without knowing Him, we cannot love Him.'

Turning to Rūmī's attitude to the rational knowledge and learning of his day, William Chittick explains that he accepted them as a valid mode of 'seeing with the pure light'. The true purpose of learning, however, was 'to act as a support for the real business. The real business is love, and love is total dedication to God and nothing else.'

Such a fearless and penetrating analysis of the subject, abandoning the intellectual 'comfort zone', is a relatively rare accomplishment among academics and shows that the seeker for the way to the 'Lost Heart' will not necessarily fail to find help in the works of distinguished professors. For its author's breadth and depth of erudition, his humanity and his heart-awareness, *In Search of the Lost Heart* is a book to acquire and to read with seriousness and intent.

