SŪFĪSM, FATALISM AND EVIL IN THE MATHNAWĪ OF JALAL AL-DĪN RŪMĪ

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In this brief paper I want to explore the implications of two philosophic problems as they relate to the doctrines of Ṣūfīsm, i.e., Muslim mysticism. To be more exact, what I want to do is to look at two philosophic puzzles, the problem of fatalism (or the problem of free will, as it is sometimes called), and the theological problem of evil, in the writings of a particular Ṣūfī poet, the great Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (672-738 A.H.). There are not a few genuine difficulties that faith must raise for reason to contend with that cannot help but exercise both faculties well and truly.

Muslim mysticism is most admirably exemplified in the poetical works of Rūmī. This greatest of the Persian mystical poets after an exhaustive study of Ṣūfīsm dedicated his life to this deeply religious way of life. He was probably the originator of the mystical, devotional love dances, which were dances of adoration to a central object of adoration. These dances represent the beginning of the mystical order of the Brethren of Love and the sect of the Dancing Dervishes. Rūmī poured out his love and dedication to God in his poetry and in doing so he

reflected the tradition of the Ṣūfīs admirably; at the same time he raised a number of puzzling issues which led him into philosophic difficulty:

I want to begin my discussion of Rūmī's puzzles in part I by first saying something very briefly about Ṣūfīsm, and then locating Rūmī in this tradition, not so much historically as doctrinally. In part II, I will go on to show how Riūmī's treatment of free will and evil led him into the difficulties I believe he is in, difficulties which Rūmnī not only shares with other mystics in the Ṣūfī tradition, but difficulties which, I believe, he shares with mystics in general who impute too much or perhaps too little to the nature o f the Divine. In Part III, I will close with some observations regarding the difficulties which we have met, which may or may not please rationally minded mystics. The study herein projected does not pretend to be skeptical, orthodox, agnostic or heterodox. It simply makes, I hope, an observation about what happens to man, *qua* philosopher, mystic or ordinary human being, when he attempts to do things with language that language will not allow him to do. Perhaps describing the majesty of God, even pointing to it, however perfectly or imperfectly, however symbolically or lite rally, is not something language, or any symbol system was ever meant to do.

But now let me turn to Ṣūfīsm and its philosophical assumptions.

I. SUFISM AND RUMI

Ṣūfism, Muslim mysticism or what has been called the perennial philosophy as expressed through Islām, can be summarized in a number of very brief statements. Individual Ṣūfīs may disagree over interpretations of these summary statements but I believe that all of them are bound more or less to the spirit of each of these presuppositions. In particular, Rūmī himself can be seen quite clearly as an exponent of each of these assumptive statements.

1. On Metaphysics:

Only one real Being exists, and this ultimate One is God. All else, including man, the world and the various relations between man and the world are consequently derivative. The realization that only God is ultimately real is, of course, the driving force behind all the activities of the mystic. Metaphysically, then, a mystical monism lies at the foundation of Ṣūfīsm.

2. On Man:

Man possesses a dual nature, part Divine and part human. Here Ṣūfism betrays the influence of early Neo-Platonism, a philosophy which probably lies at the root

and heart of all mystical philosophies outside the Hindu-Buddhist fold. The indwelling Light in man is God's Spirit in-born in man. This Logos, or Rational Principle, is God. If it were not identical with God then there would be two or more ultimately Real entities in the universe, and this would violate the metaphysical monism presumed in 1.

3. *On Ethics:*

Moral rules are given or revealed to man to enable him to guide and control the human part of his nature mentioned in 2. Only when that nature has been properly guided or instructed can the Light shine out and seek its Source, God. Ethics is given short shrift by most mystics; for, ethics is, after all, generally nothing more nor less than a set of rules for getting on well in the world. But for the mystic the world is simply an emanation from God, and not essentially God, and therefore not significant and not important. The mystic's refusal to comply with the world's rules, or to run his life by the world's rules, whether those rules be moral, intellectual, religious, social or what-have-you, has led him repeatedly into trouble with the world and the world's laws. The mystic, and therefore the Ṣafī, of course, seems to be a law unto himself. In reality he is a law unto God and God alone, as defined by his Logos, his Light, his Rational Indwelling Guardian.

4. *On God in Revelation:*

God has made Himself known to man through the *Qur'ān*. His attributes, properties and other predicates attributable to God, are revealed through His words to the Prophet and to the mystics who are able to listen to that Reality or the Spirit of Muhammad in the tradition. For our purposes here, God is revealed as omniscient (all-knowing) in that past events, present events and future events are all actually present to Him; God is just and merciful and good; and God is omnipresent in the creation, ever aware and immanent in the phenomenal forms of the creation, as well as transcendent to the world of space and time; and, finally, God is omnipotent, all powerful in act and in potentiality in His immanent as well as His transcendent form. These properities of God are revealed in scripture, and they are, as a set of predicates, the source for the puzzles and problems that we shall be examining below. These problems can be generated only if one takes the language fairly literally, and most mystics seem quite willing to do just that, and most religious men seem equally willing to do just that. Once they interpret scriptual talk about God in this anthropomorphic manner their pronouncements naturally fall within the purview of the theologian and the philosopher. In part II below, I hope to demonstrate this philosophic concern with the predicates of God,

5. *On Free Will:*

By certain acts freely chosen, man is able to participate in the Divine nature wholly and completely. By certain acts freely chosen and not compelled, man is able to overcome and conquer his human self, his lower nature, in conformity with certain moral or behavioral rules of conduct. The goal of the mystic, however, is to have his will conformed to that of the Divine Will. When this occurs the human will and the Divine will become united, and then the human will is said to be truly free. Our concern in part II below will be, however, with the freedom of the human will quite apart from considerations of the Divine Will.

6. *On Man's Final End:*

The goal of the Sūfī īs a mystical union with God, in which all trace of personality or human nature has been conquered and lost. Man becomes immersed in the Divine Nature, attains to ultimate reality, and rests forever in God. Put in terms of the perennial philosophy of mysticism the assumption is that there is an identity between the Divine Ground and man's true or real Self. The path to salvation consists in the gradual or even sudden realization of this basic, underlying identity of that Self and the Divine Ground. And the final assumption of the perennial philosophy is that salvation or the goal attained, consists in the true

knowledge of that identity between Self and Divine Ground.

These six assumptions, then, exemplify the basic philosophy of Ṣūfīsm: There is only one ultimate Reality or God; part of man's nature is identical with that Reality; man can know this or experience this mystical identity through control of his human and lower self by following certain ethical or moral rules; that God's nature, and therefore man's goal, have been defined in sacred Revelation, notably in the Qur'ān and the Qur'ānic tradition of prophets and saints; that man by an act of free choice is able to overcome the world and his phenomenal self and thereby, finally, achieve salvation through union with the One, the Ultimate or God.

Rūmī's poetic pronouncements give magnificent voice to all of the six assumptions of Ṣufism. Very briefly I would like to concentrate on only three of the assumptions mentioned above and then show how Rūmī speaks to each. For it is in what he says with regard to man, God and free will that the puzzles arise for Rūmī, and *pari passu* the same puzzles arise for the Sūfīs in general as well as for all those mystical traditions which make the same kinds of assumptions.

Rūrnī's masterful *Mathnawī* is a collection of about 25,000 rhyming couplets. In the six books of the *Mathnawī*

he sets forth his mystical philosophy in a loosely organized but always illuminating, always moving series of anecdotes, essays, preachments and interpretations. About this work the author himself has said,

> The *Mathnawī* is the shop for unity *(waḥdat);* anything
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> that you see there except the One (God) is an idol.[1]

Around this central theme, the Poet has woven a delightful series of themes, all relating in one way or another to the six central assumptions of Ṣūfism mentioned above, and all leading more or less to the one singular passion of Rūmī's own mind and thought: The love of God and the Self's union with God. It is to the peculiar nature of God then that we first turn. Rūmī says of God's omnipotence:

God hath established a rule and causes and means for the sake of all who seek Him under this blue canopy.

Most things come to pass according to the rule, but sometimes His power breaks the rule.[2]

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[1] 1 R.A. Nicholson, *Rūmī: Poet and Mystic* (1207-1273) (London: George

Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1956), pp. 22-23.

[2] *Ibid.,* p. 114 *(Mathnawī,* V, 1543). All quotations from the *Mathnawi* are from the Nicholson translation (6 books; Cambridge: the University

God can, through His omnipotence, make as well as break the rules that are established in the universe. Primarily it is through miracles that such legalistic lapses are said to occur:

> He established a goodly rule and custom: He made the evidentiary miracle a breach of the custom.[3]

And the ground and reason for such changes in law and custom in the universe is God's will:

> The Causer brings into existence whatsoever He will, His Omnipotence can destroy all causes...[4]

It is God as universal Causer, of all things good or bad, and as a Causer who can by His will alone change or alter any event in the future, that allows us to call Him Omnipotent.

But not only is God all-powerful in what He can do, He is also all-powerful in what He knows, i.e., He is omniscient or all-knowing. Rūmī says of the clairvoyant who, like God, knows all:

> And again, casting his eye forward, he beholds all that shall come to pass till the Day of Judgement.[5]

Press, 1926-1934). I place the source of the translation in parentheses following thepage number in Nicholson.

[3] 'Ibid.
[4] 'Ibid.

God, on whom no action past, present or future is lost, sees "according to the measure of illumination", and since His illumination is perfect, His omniscience would also be perfect.

Further, Rūmi holds that God in virtue of His omniscience and omnipotence assigns life-stations to man, and yet, strangely enough, man remains free:

Yet God's assignment of a particular lot to any one does not hinder him from exercising will and choice.[6]

And, finally Rūmi defends Muslim orthodoxy when he argues that all actions are caused by God and yet man remains a free creature:

… the creature does not create his actions, and is not forced: God creates these actions together with the creatures having a free choice *(ikhtiyār)* in them.[7]

From Rūmī's discussion of these three assumptions about God, man and free will, we can now go to traditional philosophical problems about free will and evil. In part II which follows, I will take up in section A the problem of fatalism (or free will), and in section B I will treat the problem of evil.

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[5] *Ibid.,* p.113 *(Math.* IV, 2881).
[6] *lbid*
[7]*lbid., p. 155, n. 1(Math.* I, 616).

II. TWO PHILOSOPHIC PUZZLES

A. *The Problem of Fatalism*

At this juncture, I would like to suggest that we can construct three *prima facie* arguments for contending that man has no free will, even though Rūmi has a single interesting argument to meet all three of them. The three constructed *prima facie* arguments for denying free will to man are drawn, in order, from the three previous quotations. Giving a rather ordinary definition to free will, the arguments would go somewhat as follows:

1.   The God-Is-Omniscient Argument: Any man, A is free to do X (where X is any action) if and only if A had wanted to he could have chosen and done non-X. But God knows in advance that A will choose and do X. But then A could not choose non-X, nor could he do non-X; for, that would make God wrong about what He knows. Therefore since A could not choose or do other than what God knows he will choose and do, A is not free. Therefore
man is not free.

2.   The God-Assigns-Lots Argument: Any man, A, is free to do X (where X is an action of some sort) if and only if A had wanted to he could have chosen and done non-X. But God has assigned A the lot (the portion of goods, happiness, character, etc., of life) he has in this life. But then A is not free to choose to have a different lot than the one God assigned to him. Therefore there is a sense in which A is not free to choose his lot in life. Therefore man is not free.

3.   The God-Alone-Acts Argument: Any man, A, is free to do X if and only if A had wanted to he could have chosen and done non-X. But God alone is the cause of all actions, actions of choosing as well as objective actions. But then God as the Causer performs the action through A, and A cannot make God do differently than He will do through A. Therefore A could not choose and do non-X when the Causer has chosen and done X. Therefore A is not free. Therefore man is not free.

These three constructed arguments then, the God-is-omniscient argument, the God-assigns-lots argument, and the God-alone-acts argument all lead to the same conclusion, viz., that man is not free, that all his actions are in some sense Divinely compelled.

Rūmī, of course, does not accept the conclusions we have drawn from these quotations. He does not indicate in the preceding contexts what"free will" consists of, and hence it may be moot whether he would accept even the way the three arguments have been setup. Further, he does not, save in one instance, argue to any extent in defense of his free will conclusions in the context of the above quoted passages regarding God as omniscient, lot-Assigner or sole Causer. That one defense of his conclusion that man is free in the face of these properties of God comes out in his discussion of the God-alone-acts argument. The defense that he gives, curiously enough, has had a long history in Western philosophy whenever the same puzzle about free

will within a theological context has appeared. The defense Rūmī gives is familiar to readers of C.A. Campbell and Williams James,[8] and Rūmi, some six hundred years earlier, stated it as follows. He opens with the God-alone-acts doctrine:

> If we let fly an arrow, the action is not ours: we are only the bow, the shooter of the arrow is God.

> This is not compulsion *(jabr):* it is Almightiness *(jabbārī)* proclaimed for the purpose of making us humble.[9]

And then comes Rūmī's argument to show that despite the fact that God is the Compeller (al-Jabbār) and that we are His slaves and entirely subject to His Will, man is nonetheless free:

> Our humbleness is evidence of Necessity, but our sense of guilt is evidence of Free-will.

> If we are not free, why this shame? Why this sorrow and guilty confusion and abashment?[10]

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[8] This fact was pointed out to me by Professor Joseph L. Schuler.

[9] *Ibid.,* p. 115 *(Math.* I, 616).

[10] *Ibid.* Rūmi gives a similar defense of free will later in the same passage when he says:

> If you are conscious of God's compulsion, why are you not heartbroken? Where is the sign of your feeling the chains with which you are loaded?

Rūmī's defense, short as it is, compels attention nonethelsss. He attempts to show that there is a necessary connection between the sense of guilt or shame and free will. In other words, if a man did not have free will, he would suffer no pangs of conscience over what he had done, simply because pangs of conscience are a sign of the existence of free will: The guilt I feel, the sorrow I feel, is a sign that I am responsible for what I do. And I could not be responsible unless I was truly free in what I did. Thus guilt is evidence of responsibility and responsibility is evidence for free will; each entails the other and we can conclude, Rūmī must feel, that man is therefore free.

Let me make two brief comments on Rū^mī's defense: First, Rūmi makes a logical leap from the feeling of guilt to the fact of responsibility when he, in effect, argues that the guilt I feel is a sign that I am responsible; in other words, Rūmī begins with a feeling and ends with a fact inferred from that feeling: This is logically illegitimate. All that he is strictly

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How should one make merry who is bound in chains? Does the prisoner behave like the man who is free?

Whatever you feel inclined to do, you know very well that you can do ... *(Ibid.)*

The argument seems to be that if we were not free we would feel heartbroken or sad. But we do not feel heart-broken or sad. Therefore we must be free. This argument can be attacked, of course, but I would rather focus attention on the sense-of-shame argument above.

allowed to say on the basis of his feeling or guilt is, not that responsibility exists, but merely that a *feeling* of responsibilty exists. And the existence of the feel ing of responsibility may or may not entail the *feeling* of free will, but it certainly cannot entail the fact of free will. In other words Rūmī may argue legitimately only that the feeling of guilt entails the feeling of responsibility which in turn may entail the feeling of free will, but he cannot argue legitimately from the feeling of guilt, to the fact of responsibility, to the fact of free will. When the argument is put entirely in terms of feelings, Rūmī's defense of free will collapses, and for the simple reason that the feeling of something does not in any sense prove or guarantee the objective existence of anything beyond, perhaps. other psychological feelings: Rūmi's defense of free will won't work.

Second, one can always use a counter example to show that Rūmī's defense will not show what he intends it to show. Psychologists tell us that the compulsive desire to steal, kleptomania,is accompanied frequently and most often by feelings of remorse, guilt and shame. The kleptomaniac is not free either in the choosing or in the action resulting from that choice. Hence, to conclude that the feeling of guilt entails free will is just plain wrong:Rūmī,s defense of free will again will not work.

Rūmi's attempt to solve what we called the problem of fatalism comes to grief for the reasons mentioned above: He

cannot leap from feelings to facts in his defense of free will, nor can he fly in the face of a perfectly good counter example that shows that some feelings of guilt are accompanied by compulsive, non-free, actions.

Let me turn next to the second of the traditional philosophical puzzles that Rūmi grapples with, whether consciously or not, in the *Mathnawi.*

B. The Theological Problem of Evil

A second philosophical puzzle appears in Rūmi's writings, and while it can be connected to the first problem dealt with above in A, I will treat it separately here. The puzzle I speak of is an old puzzle in the West, having its roots in the Platonic corpus, but receiving its most vociferous form among the Christian theologians of the early church, notably in St. Augustine. The puzzle was probably first formulated by Epicurus (341-270 B.C.E.) and quoted by Lactantius (260-340 A.C.E.):

> God either wishes to take away evils and is unable; or He is able, and is unwilling; or He is neither willing nor able, or He is both willing and able. If He is willing, and is unable, He is feeble, which is not in accordance with the character of God; if He is able and unwilling, He is envious, which is equally at variance with God; if He is neither willing nor able, He is both envious and feeble, and therefore not God; if He is both willing and able, which alone is suitable to God,

from what source then are evils? or why does He not remove them ?[11]

Lactantius' lengthy statement of the problem of evil can easily be reduced to four premises and a question:

1. God is omnipotent.
2. God is all-good.
3. God is omniscient.
4. Evil exists.
5. But if God could prevent evil (He is omnipotent) and does not, then He is malevolent. And if God would want to prevent evil (He is all-good) but cannot, then He is not omnipotent. Then where does evil come from? Thus the problem of evil.

Rūmī more or less accepts all of the first three premises of the above argument, and there is sufficient evidence among his writings that he even accepts the reality of evil premise as well; for, Rūmī argues, God created all the good things as well as all the evil things. Thus he avoids the need for an all-evil Ahriman, such as the Magians employed, to account for the existence of evil.

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[11] Lactantius, *On the Anger of God,* Ch. XIII, qouted in A. L. Herman, *The Problem of Evil and Indian Thought* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, forthcoming). In this book I have tried to show the origins of the problem of evil in the Western and Indian contexts, and to demonstrate that of the twenty-three or so solutions that have been proposed to it, all save one, the solution entailing *samsara,* fall on hard times. Rūmi's attempts to answer the problem of evil also, it seems to me, come to naught.

E.H. Whinfield has summarized Rūmī's various attempted solutions to the problem of evil, and before looking closely at two of these solutions, let me mention, following Whinfield, these attempted solutions:

> ...what we call evil has in reality no real existence of its own, being merely, as St. Augustine said, a"negation", or not-being — a departure from the Only Self-existent Being.[12]

Let me call this attempted solution to the problem of evil"the evil-is-unreal solution". Whinfield continues:

> In the next place, the poet points out that much of what we call evil is only relative— what is evil for one being good for another; — nay more, that evil itself is often turned into good for the good.[13]

The notion that evil is really good in disguise, the last phrase above, is actually a species of the evil-is-unreal solution to the problem of evil. But the relativity of evil doctrine, the first part of the quotation above, takes evil as real and is no solution at all, as a little reflection will show; for, it admits evil but does not explain or justify it. Whinfield continues his list:

> Further, he insists on the probationary design of much so-called evil. As Bishop Butler says, life is a state of

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[12] *Masnawī-i Ma'nawī: The Spiritual Couplets of Moulana Jalal-al-Dīn Muhammad Rūm!,* abridged trans. by E. H. Whinfield (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1898), p. XXX.

[13] *Ibid.*

probation, and probation involves the existence of evil lusts and pains to prove us.[14]

This justification for evil entails the premise that evil functions to test us, to discipline us, and to build our character. Let me denominate this attempted solution to the problem of evil"the discipline solution." Whinfield continues with the discipline solution,

How, the poet asks, could there be self-control without evil passions to be controlled, or patience without the pressure of afflictions to be born? Much evil, again, is medicinal....[15]

Thus the discipline solution to the problem of evil.

A final solution dealt with by Rūmi, or at least found and discussed in the Poet's work, is used to explain evil simply as retribution or punishment for sins that man commits:

Lastly, much evil has a punitive purpose."He who grieves the *Logos* must look for tribulation in the world."[16]

Thus God in His goodness is not only merciful but just. And in His justice He will repay evil doers according to their crimes. This attempted solution, like the others before

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[14] [1] *Ibid.*

[15] *Ibid.*
[16] *Ibid.,* pp. XXX-XXXI.

it, seeks to take the properties of God, His omnipotence, His goodness and His omniscience, and make them consistent with the presence of real evil in the world. Let me call this last attempted solution to the problem of evil"the justice solution" to indicate that evil can be explained and justified as God's punishment of man for human wickedness.

Let me comment now very briefly on Whinfield's catalogue of Rūmī's solutions. We have three attempted solutions: The evilis-unreal solution, the discipline solution, and, finally, the justice solution. The first, the evil-is-unreal solution, is plainly inconsistent with the other two; for, both of the latter admit to the existence and the necessity of evil for building character or for punishing sinful man. Rūmī gives expression to the evil-is-unreal doctrine occasionally in his writings and this view is plainly consistent with his metaphysical mystical monism as described in part I. But it plainly affronts common sense to argue that there is no evil or no real evil in the world, and, since it runs counter to the other two solutions, I am not going to deal with it in the remainder of the paper. Furthermore, as some reflection will show, the evil is-unreal solution, when taken in its most literal interpretation, cannot be used as a solution to the problem of evil; for, one simply cannot generate that problem unless one begins by assuming that the evil-is-unreal

doctrine is false. That is to say, without the existence of evil, however real or partially real it might be, there can be no problem of evil at all. I will concentrate then on the other two solutions.

The two remaining attempted solutions have difficulty in explaining what I shall call 'hard evil'. Hard evil is not simply ordinary pain and suffering, toothache pain, sore throat pain, and ordinary physical and psychological suffering. Soft evil, if I can call ordinary pain by that name, has a purpose and function in the world. Soft evil helps us to grow, to learn, to become men and women of mature reason and sensibility. Soft evil warns us that hot pans should not be picked up, that teeth need repairing, that our bodies need attention, that death comes with old age. Soft evil does discipline us and it does build our character for goodness, manliness and Godlikeness. But hard evil, extraordinary or dysteleological evil, does just the opposite. it destroys our hearts and souls and minds. It kills the spirit of the weak, and it makes the strong cynical and cruel. It drives the weak īnsane, and it renders the strong impotent and enervated. Hard evil exists when babies and children die horribly and mangled, suffering untold misery. Such unfortunates are not having their characters disciplined (thus the discipline solution), nor are they being punished for any apparent wickedness (thus the justice solution). To argue that such hard evil either builds

character or is a just punishment for sin is to be singularly callous, cruel and sadistic to the highest degree. Neither of the solutions proposed above can solve the problem of hard evil, and to believe they can would simply display an insensitivity to the human condition that must affront the plain man.

There is one other solution that occurs in Rūmī's writings that I would like to conclude with. It serves to extend the catalogue of attempted solutions, and Rūmi does take it seriously enough to warrant our including it here. I believe it also breaks on the wrack of hard evil as its predecessors have done, but perhaps the reader will find in this new solution, a certain distinguished merit anyway.

The fourth attempted solution that Rūmī considers is stated in this way:

> Note, then, this principle, O seeker: pain and suffering make one aware of God; and the more aware one is, the greater his passion.[17]

Call this fourth and final solution"the awareness-of-God solution". The justification for evil under this attempted solution is simply that it leads the soul to God, that

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[17] Nicholson, *Rūnmī: Poet and Mystic,* pp. 155-156 *(Math..* 1, 616).

suffering, tribulation and pain turn one to God. There is a certain amount of truth no doubt in this assertion. The awareness-of-God solution to this extent is not unlike the discipline solution noted earlier. When one suffers, or when one notes extraordinary suffering in others one does legitimately ask, Why do I suffer?, Why does he suffer? One answer, and a respectable answer to the Ṣūfīs and to Rūmī, would be that you suffer for God's sake, so turn to God for your answer. But just as the discipline solution failed in the face of hard evil, I fear that the awareness-of-God solution must similarly succumb. The suffering of infants and children, the utterly ruthless, relentless, absolutely incorrigible suffering of the young and immature does not turn them to God. To argue that it does would be to fly in that face of the evidence. To argue that it should would seem at the very least callous and immoral. The conclusion must be then that given the attributes of God noted earlier, and given the presence of hard evil, the awareness-of-God solution will not solve the problem of evil.

In part III which follows I want to offer some rather minor observations on Rūmī's attempts to solve the problem of fatalism and the problem of evil.

III. CONCLUSIONS

In this brief excursion through the mystical poetry of Rūmī we have attempted to treat his work in the most literal

and philosophical sense. Perhaps poets, seers, sages and mystics should not be handled in this rough rational way. Perhaps their function as poets and mystics places them automatically beyond the pale of philosophic confrontation, perhaps their function is simply one of inspiring and challenging the reader, of goading the listener and reader, through the use of prescriptive and commendatory sentences rather than through descriptive sentences and assertions, to see God, to consider his life, or to change his ways. But Rūmī and the other Ṣūfīs can be seen as both poets as well as philosophers, as inspired visionaries as well as rational pedagogues. And it was to this second way of viewing Rūmī and the Ṣūfīs that I have been speaking here in this paper.

If my conclusions are correct, Rūmi and with him, perhaps, the other Sūfīs he represents, do not have sound rational answers to the puzzles that confronted us, the problem of fatalism and the problem of evil. But more important than their failure, I believe, is their attempt to seek out a sound theodicy, justifying the ways of God's omniscience and His omnipotence in the face of human freedom and human suffering. Their attempt and in particuiar Rūmī's magnificent attempts to discover rational solutions to these mysteries is what is after all most important here. His failure at finding a rational solution, if indeed it is a failure, counts as little when compared with those efforts.