

IRAN COLLOQUIUM

Form and Meaning and the Meanings of Forms in the Poetry of Rumi

Franklin Lewis

Associate Professor of Persian Language and Literature
Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations
The University of Chicago



The discursive method of story-telling in Mowlânâ Jalâl al-Din Rumi's *Maṣnavi* has been criticized, not only in our day, but in his own, for its failure to present a linear argument or systematic theosophy. Some scholars, defending the poem, propose a deep, almost hidden, structure to the work.

But can we, alongside Rumi's poetics of silence (a prominent feature of his *Divân-e Shams*), postulate a poetics of discursivity in the *Maṣnavi* – a deliberate heuristic method that intertwines several strands of argument through a spiraling, open-ended treatment of various central themes, like pilgrims circling around the Kaaba?

The dichotomy between form and meaning is one of the fundamental principles of Rumi's view of the cosmos, a theme to which he repeatedly returns. By form (*ṣurat*) he means a surface, a visible and accessible phenomenon; meaning (*ma'ni*) is the subtle or hidden reality beyond the form, not always apparent, at least not to every onlooker, because it requires vision and spiritual insight to perceive.

This paper will propose some possibilities and some problems to understanding this dichotomy of forms and meanings as a hermeneutic key to reading Rumi.

Wednesday, April 4th

4:00 - 5:30 pm

Rosenkranz 05, 115 Prospect St.

Coffee/Tea will be provided

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