

Molavi's Message to Modern- minded Man

Homayun Jamshidian¹, Laila Norozpoor²

Received: 19/5/2013

Accepted: 27/9/2014

Abstract

Modern-minded man, as the modern time necessities, believes in the concrete world, and if does not deny metaphysics, he finds it unperceivable and unreachable and hence, ignores some of his potential and spiritual abilities.

Metaphysics form man's spiritual life, absence of which results in mental nervousness and leads to nihilism, and thus death, men's inevitable final destiny, appears like a monster. To be away from which and forget it, man requires engaging himself in the concrete, and not reflecting upon death at all.

This paper attempts to investigate the questions as: How does Molavi perceive metaphysics? How does he engage himself with it? And while he follows his religious and spiritual way of thinking, how the face of death is displayed in Molavi's thoughts?

Molavi's works represent a human's perception and experience gained from the Prophets' teachings which were put into practice in Molavi's own life. One can find lots of Molavi's couplets dealing with the same, pondering upon which can smooth the harshness of the concrete world in the light of the spiritual world, and generate yet another type of world.

Keywords: Modern-minded Man; Molavi; Spirituality; Religion; Death.

1. Assistant Professor, Dept. of Persian Language & Literature, Golestan University, homayunjamshidian@yahoo.com

2 . Assistant Professor, Dept. of Persian Language & Literature, Golestan University, norozpoor@yahoo.com

1. Introduction

Although some of the medieval researchers believe that the Middle Ages have not been an era of absolute ignorance, and what highlights the importance of this period is the endeavor to perceive the spiritual life (Brehier, 2001:306), because of the distinctive viewpoint the Catholic church used to preach, and seeking monopoly that only the Christian doctrines were considered to be the sole interpretation of the whole aspects of the universe, and the exalted concepts sought in the Greek and Roman classical literature meaning magnificence in the seeking the past, all and all meant ignoring the human being of that time.

The scientific findings prior to the Renaissance did not cause to bring any change to human attitude toward science and did not cause to make it a base and foundation for

everything, but during the Renaissance period the scientific achievements changed the attitude toward science and the same attitude subsequently influenced the philosophical thinking and its accomplishments very much. Stace said about the contrast between the medieval mind and the modern mind: The former was dominated by religion, while the latter is dominated by science (Stace, 1952:17).

Since the empirical science is based on observation, naturally what is observable for an empirical scientist is considered as a fact. Stating Renaissance scholars, viewpoints concerning the religion, Copleston concludes in this manner that it should not be conceived that scientific achievements during Renaissance period suddenly caused to disconnect the relationship between the world and God; stating

viewpoints of some people like Newton who did believe in this fact that the physics science was not considered to be the sole origin of the knowledge, he considers this disconnection of the relationship as scientific something caused by the improvement of the method in the realm of the knowledge; observational and inductive method, and mathematical and deductive method (Copleston, 2010,V3: 342-3) Dispute with the church during Renaissance was replaced with dispute with the religion. Ernest Cassirer emphasizes on this point that although some philosopher like Voltaire had opposed against the church and superstitions and not with the faith and religion, their followers could not distinguish these two –faith and superstition- from each other (Cassirer, 1966: 134), and naturally for man, consisting of two opposite parts angelic and brutal, ignoring the

religious faith could be received as excluding half of his being. The introduction part cannot be concluded without stating this fact that reasoning in the religious faith can be considered as one of the achievements of Renaissance scholars; that is the faith that human wisdom can confirm and that can accept the mundane (worldly) life.

This view point contains both the most important medieval reflection stating that the universe is a moral system, and assuring the ability of the human mind in contemporary world.

This paper attempts to investigate Man's position in the World at first, and then to know how Molavi perceives metaphysics, how he engages himself in it , and while he follows his religious and spiritual way of thinking, how the face of death is displayed in Molavi's thought.

2. Man's Position in Modern World

'Modern Man' means a man who has passed through the requisites of the traditional world; he may consider God as the creator of the whole universe, but he does not believe that there is a close relationship between God and everything is performed in the real world, and does not look at the world as a whole. In principle, an empirical attitude looks for decomposition and does not take everything as a whole. "The Islamic ideology is based on the idea that all the phenomena in the world of nature are symbols reflecting divine realities and that all the things move according to His Will and their spiritual nature (malak t) which is in His Hands. It's based on the conception that only the law of God, *shar ah* has ultimate claim upon us" (Nasr, 2001:27) Missing the ability of intuition which is one of the tools

for recognition of spirituality, from one hand, deprives Man from recognition of the principle concepts such as life, death, prosperity, etc and for this reason, he feels loneliness and alienation, and fails to find his position in the whole universe, and from the other hand, in the same thought.

Man turns to be the goal and the end of everything, because of the elimination of metaphysics, and "modern civilization has sunk stage by stage until it has reached the level of the lowest elements in man and aims at little more than satisfying the needs inherent in the material side of his nature, an aim that is in any case quite illusory since it constantly creates more artificial needs than it can satisfy" (Guenon, 2001: 17).

The most important characteristics of modern humanism are as follows:

- Monopolization of rationalism
- Disconnection of human direct relation with his own heavenly aspects
- Genuineness of human sense and experience
- Dissanctification of ethics
- Genuineness of corporal and sensory pleasures

Contemplating the human being and his way of living in the world, we can say that many of his inclinations have changed over centuries, for example, man has changed his vehicles over time, and this change has always developed to be more convenient and more beautiful, but in this regard what has been remained constant has been the feelings of providing innovation and comfort.

3. Molavi's Attitude toward Metaphysics

Modern-minded man, in the post-Renaissance period, paid little

attention to spiritual affairs, with ever-increasing development of technology and industry and scientific achievements. Day after day scientific achievements and utilization of empirical and scientific methods in studying methods the phenomena caused to generalize the same to everything even the spiritual affairs, inattention to the spiritual affairs, from the other hand, took the ability of understanding those affairs away from man. As if spirituality was like a book the language of this could be understood only by trying an experiencing. Paying no attention to sacred affairs, man came to this conclusion that it was too difficult for him to understand these metaphysical notions, and man forgot those methods that were only used to understand trivial phenomena, and because those

methods failed to be used in spiritual affairs, man denied them.

Modern-minded man, as the modern life and the empirical attitude toward the world necessitate, considers mostly the concrete, and the mere attention to the concrete knowledge disables man from perceiving the invisible world. Guenon says: "The modern conception, on the contrary claims to make the various sciences independent, denying everything that transcends them, or at least by declaring it to be "unknowable" and refusing to take it into account, which in practice comes to the same things. this negation existed long before it was erected into a systematic theory under such names as "positivism" or "agnosticism," and it may truly be said to be the real starting- point of all modern science. It was however only in 19th century that men began to glory in

their ignorance and claim to deny to others any knowledge to which they had no access themselves; and this marked yet one more stage in the intellectual decline of the West" (Guenon, 2001: 45).

Scholars and philosophers have always dealt with the constant parts of human existence; Molavi has also talked about these sorts of constancy in his own poetic and prose works, characteristics which build up man's being. Spiritual affairs and attention to the origin of creation are among these characteristics disregard to which leads to perplexity and agitation of the soul. The Holy Quran states in this regard:

"But whosoever turns away from my remembrance, his shall be a life of narrowness, and on the resurrection day, we shall raise him blind.¹" (TaHa:124)

1. Translated by Arbery

and It also states: "In God remembrance are at rest the hearts."¹ (Ra'd:28)

Molavi emphasizes on paying attention to sacred affairs, as if he was beyond the time and was saying to the present. Molavi is addressing today's man. The farther today's man or Modern-minded man is away from the spiritual world, the more he requires these spiritual speeches. According to Molavi's poetical works which are explanation of spiritual contemplations or revelations and spiritual experiences, we can go through Molavi's attitude about the spiritual world and his viewpoints:

If the animal sense could see the King (God), then the ox and ass would behold Allah.

If, besides the animal sense, thou hadst not another sense outside of (unconditioned by) the desire of the flesh, Then how should the sons of Adam have been honored? How by means of the

common sense should they have become privileged (to know these mysteries)?
(Molavi, 2002, V1: 327)

In the above –mentioned verses from *Mathnavi*, Molavi distinguishes between the man and the animal. Molavi's sayings are based on the following bases:

- 1 - Animal's feeling belongs to the self and desire.
- 2- Animal's feeling fails to see Allah
- 3- Sons of Adam (Human beings) are honorable
- 4- Allah is visible
- 5- Man is reliable
- 6- Man becomes reliable, seeing Allah

Molavi considers being too much engaged in the concrete and not cared about divine and spiritual affairs, lead to being animals. He believes in inward feeling with assistance of which spiritual affairs can be perceived. Molavi finds them in comparison with the external senses as gold in comparison with copper (Molavi, 2002, V1: 326).

1. Translated by Arbery

The external senses lead man to trivial and low affairs, and man has been imprisoned in materialism if he does not seek and gain for himself the far-sighted eye.

When He implants in you the asinine qualities, (even) if you have a hundred wings (expedients) you will fly to the stable. (Molavi, 2002, V2: 1901)

Molavi illustrates this belief of his own, telling a story, a man imprisoned in materialism is just like a fetus in its mother's womb who is unable to perceive the external world because of blood-eating and Molavi finds those who deny the spiritual just like fetuses to whom pious men talk about the spiritual world, but they are imprisoned within the existed senses in the womb. If they abandon the covetousness of blood-eating, they will be born. They come to another world and will perceive the worders

with sharper senses, while the senses in the womb were the more limited forms of them (v1: 620-1). He believes that the right path to achieve insight is to reduce eating and sleeping which are symbols of this worldly living:

Refrain thyself a little from sleep and food: bring the gift for thy meeting with him.

Become scant of sleep (like them that) were slumbering (but a small part of the night); in the hours of dawn be of (those who) were asking pardon of God.

Stir a little, like the embryo, in order that thou mayst be given the sense which behold the light,

And mayst go forth from this womb-like world: and mayst go from the earth into a wide expanse.

Know that the saying, "Gods earth is wide" refers to an exceedingly sublime expanse belonging to the prophets. (Molavi, 2002, V1: 256)

Sometimes, in some poems, Molavi talks about his spiritual contemplations and about those who do not plainly belong to this world and they talk to him about spiritual worlds:

“I said, show me the ladder, I may mount up to heaven.” He said, “Your head is the ladder; bring your head down under your feet.”

When you place your feet on your head, you will place your feet on the head of the stars; when you cleave through the air, set your foot on the air, so, and come! (Molavi, 2004: p19)

Or in a lyric, he hears a speech which addresses him reprovingly:

Whither would you fly from my clutch? Who knows how to rend the net of omnipotence?

Since you have not the foot to flee from me, bend down your neck, have done with obstinacy. (ibid: 621)

In these poems, Molavi clearly talks about what he has heard and seen which are not audible and visible the same as that of the concrete world, and they can be achieved by being released from the prison of sensible things.

4. Molavi's Attitude toward Death

Death has been man's permanent anxiety and derangement, and how he encounters it reveals how and how much he believes in the metaphysic world because according to the religious teachings those who believe in a world beyond the concrete, perceive death as the beginning of another phase in life. During the history, man has never lived being away from the thought of death; since the ancient times, sometimes he has facilitated the harshness of death with the imagination of eternity, and sometimes with death prior to death

has escaped from the fear of death. In the modern time, with the flourish of the technology, the more man's relations with the Heaven has declined, especially in the west, the more dreadful face death has shown of itself to the men separated from the Creator. They have amused themselves with the mundane life and its attachments so as not to behold this unpleasant face of death.

Gadamer said about the gradual disappearance of the representation of death in modern society: "It's precisely those enormous technological advances, with their goal at the artificial presentation of life, which reveal the absolute limit of what we can achieve" (Gadamer, 1996:61-62). Sana'ati also states that modern man's thoughts had been instructed in such a way not to contemplate death any longer. In the modern era of deep reflection, man's reasoning has been about life

not death. He could solve his human problems in this world, using technology; therefore there was no reason to revert to death" (Sana'ati *et al.*, 2009: 7).

Death, hither and thither, presents in a corpse; modern man like his own ancestors is fully engaged in the thought of death. From the other hand, Molavi perceives death based on mysticism, he does not imagine death to be nonbeing, and never attempts to forget it; he sees death as a cause to pass the life passages:

I died to the inorganic state and became
endowed with growth, and (then) I died to
(vegetable) growth and attained to the
animal.

I died from animality and became
Adam (man): why, then, should I fear?

When have I become less by dying?
At the next remove I shall die to man, that
I may soar and lift up my head amongst
the angels; And I must escape even from
(the state of) angel: everything is
perishing except His Face.

Once more I shall be sacrificed and die to
the angel: I shall become that which enters
not into the imagination.

Then I shall become non-existence saith to
me, (in tones loud) as an organ, verily,
unto Him shall we return. (Molavi, 2002,
V1: 925)

In Molavi's belief, death is not an unpleasant affair, death causes man to reach to perfection from the life deficiency phases. Therefore there is no fear in death. Even death like a sweet singing musical instrument encounters its addressee and, in the end, interprets the meaning of death which is nothing but a journey towards the creator. In Molavi's later verses, he considers death as the "water of life" in the "dark region".

Molavi, as we see in intuitive sonnets, has applied whatever he mentions as a theoretical subject matter in Mathnavi. In a lyric, he hears the call of death as a call from

the Heaven that wants him to return; he is restless to embrace it, he sacrifices himself for it not once, but many times in order to hear its call once more: his happiness can be both for the death angel (Azrael)'s merry call, and for the glad tidings of reversion to Him, reversion of a beggar to the king.

In a spiritual contemplation, we hear someone who addresses Molavi and speaks about the post death adventures in this way:

You will hear my greeting in the tomb,
and you will aware that no for a moment
you have been veiled from my eyes.

On the strange night, when you hear
the voice familiar, you will escape from
the bite of snake and leap away from the
horror of ant; Love's intoxication will
bring to your grave, as a gift, wine and
mistress and candle and meats and sweets
and incense. (Molavi, 2004: 383)

Looking at death in this way which
is resulted in spiritual contemplation,
we do not perceive death as a dreadful
incident. Of course Molavi considers

everyone's death just like him himself
in his Mathnavi:

Everyone's death is of the same quality
as himself, my lad: to the enemy (of God)
an enemy, an enemy, and to the friend (of
Gog) a friend.

Your fear of death in feeling (from it)
is (really) your fear of yourself. Take
heed, O (dear) soul!

Tis your own ugly face, not the visage
of death: your spirit is like a tree, and
death (is like) the leaf.

(Molavi, 2002, V1: 889)

It is obvious that Molavi talks
about death in its most praise
worthy condition; a death worthy
enough for God's men (supreme
person), for those who deserves it,
for those who have gone beyond
this worldly life and for those who
have lived in such a way to wait a
sweet death. Death to Molavi means
to join The Most Beloved One:

When you give my life, dying is
like sugar. With you, dying is
sweeter than pleasant life.

Why do I escape from dead? Dead
is sweet like life. Why do I escape
from a mine? Dead is like a mine
of gold. (Translated by author).

The same attitude toward the
concrete world, and the belief in the
same world caused the perception of
the end of life, which is the death, to
change.

5. Molavi's Way of Living in the World

By Molavi's way of living, his
biography, gathered in sources and
biographies talking about Molavi's
observation, and things heard
sometimes mixed with.

Exaggeration and extra ordinary
sayings contributed to him by his
family members, acquaintances and
followers, is not meant, but what is
meant by his way of living is the
one reflected in his own works the
readers' familiar with which can
easily perceive and conceive it.

Now it should be recognized, from Molavi's point of view, how those attitude and beliefs create life in this world. Molavi considers life as God's symbol's and messages to man in which all creatures send messages to man with their own existence:

The dead (trees and plants) of the orchard spring up from the root, saying,
"Perceive the Giver of life" (Molavi, 2002, V2:1163)

He considers God as the origin of all happiness:

All these lovely things are from the deep sea: leave the part and keep thin eye (fixed) upon the whole. (Molavi, 2002, V1: 692)

He speaks on the part of the inanimate objects that they are conscious, but their unconscious people perceive it not:

They all say), 'we have hearing and sight and are happy, (although) with you, the uninitiated, we are mute.'

Forasmuch as ye are going towards (are inclined to) inanimateness (worldliness), how shall ye become familiar with the spiritual life of inanimate beings?

Go forth from inanimateness into the world of spirits; hearken to the loud noise of the particles of the world.

The glorification of God by inanimate beings will become evident to thee; the doubts suggested by (false) interpretations will not carry thee away (from the truth).

Since thy soul hath not the lamps (the lights necessary) for seeing, thou hast made interpretations
(Molavi, 2002, V1: 694)

In Molavi's belief, living in such a world, in which all its parts are conscious and speaking and talking about another world motivates man to develop other perceptions in himself so as to be able to hear the "gurgles of the world's parts" which this require other ears. Living in the conscious and purposive world,

growing flowers and plants of which are like prophets that recall the people to perceive living and its purposes, leaves no place for nihilism.

The blamed world in Molavi's opinion is just the greed and avidity and not perceiving the truth and the world is a concept which changes in proportion to one's knowledge. Molavi introduces other men who keep themselves away from the radiation of the spiritual light, another explanation for those who amuse themselves with an inanimate object, and the world of inanimate objects:

Like a mouse, he has burrowed in every direction, since the light drove him (back) from the door (the entrance to the hole) and said, "Away"

Inasmuch as he had no way (of getting out) to the open country and the light, he continued to make (such) an exertion even in that darkness.

If God give him wings, the wings of wisdom, he will escape from mousiness and will fly like a bird;

But if he seeks no wings, he will remain underground with no hope of traversing the path to Simak
(Molavi, 2002,V1: 502)

6. Conclusion

The modern-minded man, because of the consequences of modernity, has obtained a short-sighted, concrete, and mundane attitude. Being accustomed to the same attitude and then denying the metaphysics have gradually taken away from him. The ability to perceive the metaphysics, and he not only pays no attention to that world, but the possibility to perceive that world has been taken away from him because of weakening its receptors as well. Psychological conflicts and nihilism in life are among the consequences of rejecting the spiritual life. Molavi

who has acquired the prophets' teachings and has applied them in his own life talks about the relationship of the two worlds with each other, and acquaints us with his own spiritual contemplations. A religious and spiritual attitude does not perceive death as a dreadful devil, but a cause to lead man to God and to the more perfect phase of life.

Contemplating in Molavi's works, the Modern- minded man will feel of least a breeze of those spiritual atmospheres, and in case of having success, he will step on to spiritual territories.

References

- [1] Brehier, Emile (2001). *History of Philosophy Middle Age and Renaissance*, Translated by Yahya Mahdavi. Tehran: Kharazmi Publications.
- [2] Cassirer, Ernest (1966). *The Philosophy of Enlightenment*, Beacon Press.
- [3] Copleston, Frederick Charles (2009). *A history of Philosophy*, Translated by Ebrahim Dadjo, Vo.3, Tehran: Soroosh Publishers.
- [4] Guenon, Rene (2001). *The Crisis of the Modern World*, Translated by Artore Osborne, Marco Fallis and Nicholson, Sophiaperennis
- [5] Molavi, jalal ud-din (2002). *Mathnavi*, Translated by Reynold Nicholson, Tehran: Boote Publications.
- [6] Molavi, Jalal ud-din (2004). *Silent Words: Selection of Poetry and Prose*, Trans. by Nicholson and Arbery, Tehran: Hermes Pub
- [7] Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (2001). *Islam and Plight of Modern Man*, ABC international group, Chicago.
- [8] Sanati, Mohammad et al., (2009). *Death: A Collection of Articles*, Argenoon Mag. Tehran.
- [9] Stace, W.T., (1952). *Religion and the Modern Mind*, R. & R. Clark, Ltd., Edinburgh
- [10] Jami Al-Tafasir 2.1, *Noor*: Computer Research Centre of Islamic Sciences

پیام مولوی به انسان متجدد

همایون جمشیدیان ، لیلا نوروزپور

تاریخ دریافت: ۹۲/۲/۲۹ تاریخ پذیرش: ۹۳/۷/۵

انسان متجدد، به اقتضای روزگار جدید، به محسوسات توجه دارد و آن سوی ماده را اگر انکار نکند، ناشناختنی و دست نیافتنی می‌داند و بدین سان بخشی از توانایی‌های بالقوه خود را مغفول می‌گذارد. ماورای ماده و معنویات حیات معنوی انسان را شکل می‌دهد و فقدان آن سبب نا آرامی‌های روانی و پوچ پنداری زندگی می‌گردد و مرگ؛ سرنوشت پایانی ناگزیر انسان را، بسان هیولایی می‌نماید که تنها راه نادیدن آن دلمشغولی به محسوسات و نیندیشیدن به آن است.

در این نوشته این مفاهیم بررسی می‌شود که مولوی چگونه به عالم غیر ماده می‌نگرد و چگونه خود در آن عوالم می‌زید و در پی آن نگاه دینی و معنوی، چهره مرگ در اندیشه او چگونه است.

آثار مولوی برای انسان بریده از معنویات، حاکی از شناخت و تجربه انسانی است که تعالیم پیامبران را خود زیسته و نشانه‌هایی از آن نموده است که تامل بر آن می‌تواند درشتی عالم محسوس را در پرتو عالم معنا تلطیف کند و نگاهی دیگر را به این جهان پدید آورد.

واژگان کلیدی: انسان متجدد، دین و معنویت، مرگ، مولوی.

۱. استادیار، دانشگاه گرگان.

۲. استادیار، دانشگاه گرگان.