Kindred Spirits:
Hafez in His Poetry, Mathematicians in Their Theories

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The culmination of Persian lyric poetry was reached about a hundred years after *Sadi* with *Hafez*, the most delicate and most popular of Persian poets. Scores of studies of Hafez exist in many languages. The interest in him is universal and diverse. *Nietzsche* called his poetry the true miracle of human arts. *Ralph Waldo Emerson* considered him and *Shakespeare* as the greatest poets of all times. He had an enormous impact on Goethe in his old age, the direct result of which was the *West-Eastern Divan*, considered by many Germanists to be next in importance to *Faust*. In this work on Hafez, the speaker will draw parallels between the track of thoughts of Hafez and that of a mathematician who develops a new theory. The author thinks that such approach might help us clarify some complications in the study of the poetry of Hafez. One of the characteristics of the poetry of Hafez is that it is susceptible to many interpretations. For this reason those belonging to various intellectual, ideological, and philosophical schools see the poet as sympathetic to their way of thinking. Although we do not know to what extent the poet was familiar with mathematics, the author argues that Hafez has followed the same path as a mathematician does when he wants to fashion a theory. Hafez followed this methodology in his creation of a theory of *rendi* or *bohemianism*. In this talk, the speaker will try to show the correspondence between mathematical construction of a theory and Hafez's poetic construction of his school of rendi. The author points out that it is rare among Persian poems to find generalities, but in the poetry of Hafez, the generalizations reach the level of an almost mathematical abstraction. Like the pure forms of mathematics, they have an existence that transcends the mind of any one person, but remain understandable to all people. The mathematical principles of precision, symmetry, elegance and above all, a firm foundation in experience are all at work in the poetry of Hafez, especially the last, for the poet never strayed far from experience. The speaker shows that interpreting Hafez requires penetrating the view of concrete language to reach the abstractions behind it. In recent years most experts on Hafez have concluded that the poet had his own school called rendi. The author gives the various definitions of this term that have been suggested by the experts. He shows that no one school of interpretation is sufficient to understand Hafez. The poetry of Hafez is too complicated to be contained in any one school of thought. Hafez, in his school of rendi, embraces many different schools of thought just as mathematicians, in mathematics, embrace many mathematical theories. In mathematics, two separate theories, each consistent within itself, might contradict each other just as Euclidean and Elliptic Geometries do. In the poetry of Hafez also, we find contradictory systems, each system being consistent within itself. A good example would be the frequent change in outlook from determinism to self-determinism or vice versa. The contradictory results of the analysis of the poetry of Hafez stem from efforts that are based on this school or that. This is as absurd as an attempt to analyze all of mathematics using the axioms of one theory, say, Euclidean Geometry.