

The Concept of Love in Ibn Sina's Philosophical Mysticism: A Synthesis of Rationality and Sufism

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Abstract: This article discusses Ibn Sina's concept of love. Through this concept, the researcher wants to show that Ibn Sina's thought is not only identical to empirical, logical, and rational peripatetic philosophy, but also Sufistic. This study employed a qualitative method using a philosophical tasawwuf approach. The results show that everything that exists – whether animate or not – contains the energy of love in itself. Essentially, love is a manifestation of Allah, The Essence, who has qualities of Absolute Goodness and Perfection. In this case, God is The Subject of Love. Second, God as Absolute Goodness and Perfection is The Object of Love—the final destination movement of all that exists. Finally, through true love, people can be connected with their God, occupy the highest position, and achieve true happiness. According to Ibn Sina, humans in this stage are called Arif.

Keywords: Ibn Sina, Love, Philosophy, Philosophical Task.

A. Introduction

Ibn Sina, known in the West as Avicenna, was a prominent scientist in medicine and a philosopher whose reputation extended from the Islamic world to Europe.¹ One of his significant works, *al-Qanun fi al-Tibb* (The Canon of Medicine), was translated into Latin in the late 12th century and became a fundamental reference in European medical education until the late 17th century. His contributions spanned various fields, including medicine, logic, natural philosophy, metaphysics, epistemology, and more, and influenced both Islamic and Western thought.² Fazlur Rahman³ described him as a leading Islamic philosopher with a comprehensive philosophical system, while Muhamed S. Asimov referred to him as a universal genius.⁴

Ibn Sina's thoughts –whether related to science or philosophy– influenced Europe in the 12th century, such as Salerno and Montpellier. His medical science significantly influenced them, while his philosophy significantly influenced those of Paris and Oxford. Gundissalvus, who translated Ibn Sina's works into Latin, was the first to be directly influenced by Ibn Sina's thoughts. According to R. De Vaux, Gundissalvus is the Latin version of Ibn Sina. Anyone influenced by Ibn Sina's thoughts is William of Auvergne, Roger Bacon, Albertus Magnus, St. Thomas, and Robert Grosseteste. William of Auvergne and Roger Bacon mentioned above give credit to Ibn Sina more than they praise Ibn Rushd.

¹ Dani Ramdani, *Risalah Pengetahuan Ibn Sina*, (Bogor; Cakrawala Budaya, 2016), 40.

² William Osler, *The Evolution of Modern Medicine*, (Whitefish MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2004), 71.

³ Fazlur Rahman, *Ibn Sina's in A History of Muslim Philosophy: With Short Accounts of Other Discipline and the Modern Renaissance in Muslim Lands*, Vol. I, edited by M.M. Sharif, (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963), 430.

⁴ Muhamed S. Asimov, "Avicenna-Ibn Sina : A Universal Genius", in *The Unesco Courier, A Window Open On the World*, Oktober 1980, 4.

In general, when the Western world was in the Middle Ages, Ibn Sina contributed a lot until the Western world reached the Enlightenment and Modern Age.⁵

Although many scholars acknowledge Ibn Sina's intelligence in discussing the comprehensive philosophy of science in Islamic mysticism (*tasawwuf*), it is still debatable. Ibn Sina's mysticism can be seen, one of which is *al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat* (Remarks and Admonitions). Farhang Zabeeh mentioned that book Ibn Sina when he was in Persia when the Sassanid Empire was experiencing fall.⁶ *Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat* consists of four volumes where respectively the themes of the books are: *al-Manthiq* (Logic), *al-Tabi'iyah* (Physics), *al-Ilahiyyah* (Metaphysics), and *al-Tasawwuf* (Mysticism). Syams Inati said that Ibn Sina was late in initiating the thought of *tasawwuf*. However, this thought is also considered positive for Ibn Sina's thinking maturity: Inati's introduction to Ibn Sina and mysticism shows that Ibn Sina paid great attention to *tasawwuf* (mysticism).⁷

In the fourth theme of the book, Jules Janssens thought about Ibn Sina's uniqueness, who previously had a rationalistic-Aristotelian philosophical style of thought but ended up discussing *tasawwuf* or mysticism. According to him, there is a possibility that Ibn Sina, in this case, was 'late' in discussing or embracing mysticism both in terms of religious and philosophical aspects. Then, Janssens provides a space for academic debate about what Ibn Sina in *al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat* in the fourth volume has initiated as *philosophical mysticism* or *philosophy of mysticism*. After describing his explanation, Jules Janssens concluded that Ibn Sina did not practically mysticism; he was not a philosophical mysticism but only wrote terms of mysticism rationally according to his version. When Ibn Sina uses the terminology of classical Islamic mysticism, he interprets it in a manner that fits his philosophical system. Ibn Sina only constructs a philosophical project that rationally interprets mystical terms, expressions, and phenomena in the world of *tasawwuf* or mysticism. Jules Janssens called Ibn Sina's philosophy of mysticism.⁸

This research highlights the multidimensional nature of Ibn Sina's thought, demonstrating its profound influence on both empirical sciences and mysticism by exploring his concept of love, revealing Ibn Sina's synthesis of rational, logical philosophy with Sufistic elements, and enriching our understanding of his intellectual legacy; we can also find his mystical thoughts in another work entitled *Risalah fi Mahiyyah al-Ishq*, which specifically discusses love a core topic in Islamic mysticism— emphasizing that love makes the whole world exist, with every entity longing for what is higher than itself, from matter to soul to intellect to God, a concept of love that is intuitive and moves towards perfection, as Emil L. Fackenheim mentions in his introduction, “love for The First leads the second intelligence to perfection.”⁹

⁵ Sayyed Hossein Nars, *Three Muslim Sages; Avicenna-Suhrawardi-Ibn 'Arabi*, (New York: Caravan Books, 1976), 48-49.

⁶ Farhang Zabeeh, *Avicenna's Treatise on Logic*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), 4.

⁷ Sham Inati, *Ibn Sina and Mysticism: Remarks and Admonitions Part Four*, (London: Kegan Paul International, 1996), 1.

⁸ Jules Janssens, “Ibn Sina: A Philosophical Mysticism or A Philosophy of Mysticism?” in *Mediterranea International Journal for The Transfer of Knowledge*, 2016, 37.

⁹ Emil L. Fackenheim, “The Treatise of Love by Ibn Sina” in *Mediaeval Studies*, 1945, 210.

B. Methods

This research is library research that uses library resources to discuss the formulation of the problem. In other words, this research can be referred to as text or document studies. Furthermore, this is qualitative research, which is the primary and secondary source of this research. The primary sources that are used are books written by Ibn Sina, namely *Risalah fi Mahiyyah al-Ishq*. Furthermore, other quotations will be used as supporting or secondary analytical tools in this research, such as *al-Shifa*, *al-Najat*, and *al-Isharat was al-Tanbihat*. The data collection technique used in this study is a documentation technique in which any literature related to this research is collected and then classified, determined, investigated, and compared from one part to another. The collected data were then processed using analytical and comparative description methods. In this method, the researcher analyzes and compares one statement with another or one theory with another and then assembles it into a complete and comprehensive set of understandings.

This study used a philosophical mysticism approach. In this approach, tasawwuf aims to purify the human soul using practice (*al-riyadah*). Through spiritual practice, the human soul becomes purer. A pure soul can achieve true happiness. Philosophical mysticism uses rational arguments to explain things, such as discussions about cosmology, physics, metaphysics, soul, and God.¹⁰

C. Results and Discussions

On Risalah fi Mahiyyah al-Ishq

Risalah fi Mahiyyah al-Ishq is a treatise that explains the ontology and existence of love in life. Regarding the existence of the *Risalah fi Mahiyyah al-Ishq*, Etin Anwar mentions the position of scholars who have different opinions; some called the work a mystical treatise, some called it a philosophical treatise, and some called it metaphysical. At the same time, Etin positioned the work as a philosophical theological treatise. In her presentation, Etin mentions the unity of ideas between Ibn Sina's theology of love and Islamic theologians (*al-mutakallimun*) in general, and those adopted by Sufis. So, what Ibn Sina tried to initiate and introduce the concept of mystical love into theological discourse is a significant achievement. Therefore, it may also be necessary to regard Ibn Sina as a mystical theologian. Further research is needed to prove the existence of Ibn Sina's mystical theology, especially in the area of mystical unification. Between creatures and God is a manifestation of the stage of love and spirituality of unity (*al-Ittihad*).¹¹

In *Risalah fi Mahiyyah al-Ishq*, Ibn Sina explains that in every entity of life, there is always an underlying love. According to Ibn Sina, every entity has a desire to achieve perfection (*kamal*). This desire is expressed in the form of a love for perfection. Ibn Sina named this desire as *al-ishq*. He divides the discussion into seven chapters: first, on the power of love pervading all beings; second, on the existence of love in simple inanimate entities; third, on the existence of love in vegetative souls; fourth, on love in animal souls; fifth, on the love of those who are noble-minded and young for external beauty; sixth, the love of divine souls; and finally, the general conclusion.

¹⁰ Abdul Aziz Dahlan, "Tasawuf Sunni dan Tasawuf Falsafi", in *Ulumul Quran*, no. 8, vol. II, tahun 1991, 26-32.

¹¹ Etin Anwar, "Ibn Sina's Philosophical Theology of Love: A Study of the *Risalah fi al-Ishq*", in *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 2, (Islamabad: International Islamic University 2003), 331.

In general, the concept of love is divided into several terms, namely, *al-mahabbah*, which means love in the ordinary sense. The word *al-mahabbah* comes from *habba - yuhibbu-hubb*, which means the tendency of the heart to something in the form of desires that arise or the similarity of perception between one another.¹² That means of love in this word is like the word *al-hawa*, which also has the meaning of the soul's tendency to something; there is a desire and desire for beloved. The point of similarity is the desire or inclination towards something. Love in *al-hubb* also indicates the purity of the affection (*safa al-mawaddah*).¹³

While love in "*ishq*" means loves beyond limits (*alfart al-hubb*) or passionate love.¹⁴ Sufis uses the term *al-Ishq* more than *al-mahabbah* does. However, not a few are against the use of the word love -whether in the terminology of *al-mahabbah* or *al-ishq*- in the relationship between humans and God. We can find the following explanation in the book *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* by Annemarie Schimmel:

"Before the tenth century, however, discussions about mystical love and longing were conducted mainly on the theoretical level. The question was one about semantics. The word *mahabba* had been objected to by the orthodox, but when the first attempts were made to introduce the word '*ishq*, "passionate love", into the relationship between man and God, even most of the Sufis objected, for this root implies the concept of overflowing and passionate longing, a quality that God, the self-sufficient, could not possibly possess; nor was it permissible that man should approach the Lord with such feelings. Nuri, who probably introduced the use of the word '*ishq*, defended himself by declaring that "the '*ashiq* 'lover' is kept at a distance, whereas the *muhibb* 'lover' enjoys his love" (B 289). It was left to Hallaj openly to express by this term the inner dynamics of the divine life—as Louis Massignon calls it—an idea that was to influence later Sufi thought decisively until Fakhruddin Iraqi poetically changed the words of the profession of faith into *la ilaha illal' ishq*, "there is no deity save Love," a formulation that I often heard from Turkish Sufis."¹⁵

According to al-Hujwiri in *Kashf al-Mahjub*, there are many disputes among Sufist experts regarding the concept of passionate love (*al-Ishq*). Some Sufis consider that passionate love (*al-ishq*) for God can be justified, but it does not come from God. Love in this condition is an attribute of the person separated from his beloved, and man is separate from God, but God is not separate from man. Therefore, humans can love God; however, this term cannot be applied to God. Other Sufis argue that God cannot be the object of man's passionate love because that kind of love transcends boundaries while God is unlimited. They claim that passionate love is only appropriate for the desire to reach the essence (*dzat*), and since the essence of God is unattainable, the term *al-ishq* is not appropriate to describe the love relationship between humans and God, although the terms love (*mahabbah*) and sacred love (*safwat*) are correct.¹⁶

Moreover, they say that, while love (*mahabbah*) can be evoked by hearing, passionate love (*Ishq*) cannot be brought about without actual seeing. Hence, such love cannot be felt towards an invisible God in this world. Because the essence of God cannot be reached or

¹² Sahabuddin, dkk., (ed), *Ensiklopedi Al-Qur'an: Kajian Kosakata*, (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2007), p. 341.

¹³ Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyyah, *Taman Orang-orang Jatuh Cinta dan Memendam Rindu*, [ters], (Jakarta: Darul Falah, 1417 H), 1-9.

¹⁴ Ibn Manzhur, *Lisan al'Arab*, Jilid VI, (Beirut: Dar Ehia al-Tourath, 1999), 267.

¹⁵ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, (Chapel Hill: the University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 137.

¹⁶ Abu Hasan 'Ali Utsman al-Hujwiri, *Kashf al-Mahjub*, III, (Kairo: Al-Majlis al-A'la al-Tsaqafah, 2027), p. 420.

perceived, humans cannot feel passionate love for God. However, humans feel love (*mahabbah*) for God because God, through his attributes and actions, gives his mercy to his beloved. It is also said that passionate love (*Ishq*) can be applied to God because God and passionate love have no opponents.

Passionate love (*al-ishq*) is a very strong desire to unite (*inna al-ishq huwa shaddat al-shauq ila al-ittihad*).¹⁷ The concept of unity requires two or more entities, where one gives rise to desires, while the other provides disposition or approval. In line with this definition, Alireza Sayadmansur presents a simple definition of love put forward by Ibn Sina: love is, in truth, nothing but whole-hearted approval of the pleasing and suitable.¹⁸

The Nature of Love

Love (*al-ishq*) in Ibn Sina's thought can be traced to several of his works, both in philosophical and mystical nuances. In the Treatise of Love (*Risalah fi Mahiyah al-Ishq*), Ibn Sina states that every creature (*al-maujudat*) has a natural tendency to avoid the condition or disability and move to a perfect state. Perfection is a virtue, while self-defect is a bad thing that one will always avoid, both defects in terms of material aspects and absolute nothingness. This condition for Ibn Sina was caused by the natural desire (*shauq al-tab'i*) and innate love (*Ishq al-gharizi*) that existed in each of them. On this basis, the existence of a creature (*al-maujudat*) is determined by what is called love. Thus, love is what causes things to exist in the universe.

“Every being which is determined by a design strives by nature towards its perfection, i.e. that goodness of reality which ultimately flows from the reality of the Pure Good, and by nature it shies away from its specific defect which is the evil in it, i.e., materiality and non-being, for every evil result from attachment to matter and non-being. Therefore, it is obvious that all beings determined by a design possess a natural desire and an inborn love, and it follows of necessity that in such being's love is the cause of their existence.”¹⁹

According to Ibn Sina, everything that exists (*al-maujudat*) in this universe has a potential desire and love (*al-quwwat*), which in this case is innate. That is, desire and love, which are potential, become energy for something to be able to actualise into certain movements to perfect itself. In this sense, love can move something to a higher and perfect situation or level than the previous one. The perfection of matter by form, perfection of the soul by intellect, and intellect leads to the perfection of God. This kind of love exists naturally in everything that exists. All cosmic movements – of all the entities that exist in them without exception – are driven by the desire inherent in existence to achieve a proper end goal. Its function is to maintain its existence and develop its potential in a perfect direction. Thus, love is the basic principle of existence, whether animate.

This understanding of love – that the existence of love potentially includes all beings in this universe, whether animate or not – is considered to have a wider scope than the definition of love proposed by *Ikhwan al-Safa* (Brethren of Purity). He mentioned that love includes only animates (Leaman 2006:237). For him, love only resides in the souls of creatures, whether it be plant, animal, or rational souls possessed by humans.²⁰

¹⁷ Mulyadi Kartanegara (ed), *Rasail Ikhwan al-Shafa*, (Jakarta: Departemen Agama RI, 2007), 269

¹⁸ Alireza Sayadmansur, “Content Analysis of Love in the Context of Plato and Avicenna”, in *Hekmat va Falsafeh*, Vol. 11, No 2, 2015, 25.

¹⁹ Ibn Sina, “*Risalah fi al-Ishq*”, in Muhammad Hasan Isma'il, [ed]. *Jami' al-Bada'i*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2004), 65.

²⁰ al-Imam al-Ghazali, *Ihya 'Ulumi al-Din...*, 372.

"Know that there are three kinds of souls, as the wise men and philosophers say, so there are three kinds of love that befalls them. Among them are *nabatiyah-syahwaniyah* whose love is directed to food, drink and sex; *ghadhabiyah-hayawaniyah* whose love is focused on oppression, victory and power; and *natiqah* whose love is directed to knowledge and the acquisition of various virtues."²¹

Regarding the concept of love put forward by Ikhwan al-Safa, Emil L. Fackenheim comments that, in all its manifestations, love is a quality of the soul, not the body, because love is best defined as the desire for union with the true object of love. Unification is a spiritual attainment. Even in the manifestation of the lowest kind of love, the body functions only as a medium or instrument in an activity that is essentially an activity of the soul (Fackenheim 1945:210). If every soul has loved something, it will miss and love it; then it will think and seek it. His mind is always the object of love wherever he is, and he will never turn to anything other than him. He describes this experience in the verse:

"I love a beloved and never looked for a substitute in my entire life. However, if I am lucky, then he is enough for me because he is my quest. But if he passes, then I will never look for another beloved."²²

According to Ibn Sina, the essence of love is the main cause of the existence of creatures in this universe; there is nothing that is not filled with love, not even inanimate objects. Love is the cause of existence, moving energy, and is the ultimate goal.

Love in Inanimate Entities

For Ibn Sina, love exists not only in inanimate entities but also in animate entities. All entities in this universe are filled with love without exception. The existence of love in simple inanimate entities (*al-basait al-ghair al-Hayat*) can be divided into three parts:

"Simple inanimate entities are divided into three groups; matter in the real sense of the term, the type of form which cannot exist in separation, and accidents."²³

First, material substance (*al-hayulani al-haqiqiyah*), is any existing entity (*al-maujud*) which has the potential to receive all kinds of 'forms' (*al-surah*). Material substances always require certain forms. When it loses one form, it will seek another form in its place (Avicenna 2009:15). This material substance is always uncomfortable with absolute nothingness (*al-'adam al-mutlaq*). Hence, there is an ineradicable law of nature in which all beings essentially avoid nothingness absolute. Therefore, when a form is not substantially present, it is equivalent to nothingness. If the matter was not connected with form, it would create absolute nothingness. Ibn Sina mentions the absence of form for matter is a defect. By contrast, the existence of form complements the material substance. Therefore, this material substance longing for a certain form is called inborn love (*'Ishq gharizi*).

Second, the form (*al-surah*) cannot possibly be stand-alone or cannot exist in separation. The existence of innate love in this form (*al-surah*) can be seen when he is always closely attached to and inseparable from certain subjects. This simple analogy between subject and form is like the two sides of a coin, where the two cannot be separated, but are clearly distinguishable.²⁴ The form that lies in the material subject completes its existence, and this type of movement is called the power of innate love, which is natural. Ibn Sina put

²¹ Mulyadhi Kartanegara [ed], *Rasail Ikhwan al-Safa...*, 268.

²² Mulyadhi Kartanegara [ed], *Rasail Ikhwan al-Safa...*, 277.

²³ Ibn Sina, *Risalah fi al-'Ishq...*, p. 68

²⁴ William C. Chittick, *Science of The Cosmos, Science of The Soul; The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in The Modern World*, (Oxford: Oneworld Publication, 2007), 122.

forward two arguments for this, for the first, form is always attached to matter and refused when parting with him; and second, a form will look perfect when united with the matter. In contrast, there is a movement to be reunited when separated.

Third, love for accident (*al-a'rad*) and loyalty are always closely attached to a particular subject. Usually, the existence of an accident on a particular subject is very easy to change, disappear, and add (Sheikh 1970:83). Changes occur over a relatively short period, such as skin colour and personality traits possessed by humans. Thus, an accident is considered a nonindependent entity. Although love is the cause of simple inanimate entities, they do not have active freedom, as in some animate entities.²⁵

Love In Animate Entities

The existence of love inanimate entities is adjusted to the division of the soul faculty (*al-quwwah al-nafs*), where divided into three faculties²⁶, namely: First, the vegetative souls (*al-nafs al-nabatiyyah*) is a natural entity that is physical in nature which has the form of perfection with three potentials, namely the potential to maintain life through eating activities or nutritive faculty (*al-quwwah al-ghadiyah*), that is the power that replaces a physical body with another of the same shape, then attaches it to replace parts which is detached from it; the faculty of growth (*al-quwwah al-mumniyah*) that is the power that adds to the physical position it is placed in with a similar physique with appropriate additions in various aspects, namely length, width and volume to lead it to perfection in its growth; and the potential to preserve life by giving birth to similar generations, namely by means of procreation (*al-quwwah al-maulidah*), that is the power that takes from the body it occupies a potentially similar part, then performs it with the help of other similar physical parts through creation and mixing so that it becomes something similar to it actually. Regarding the functions and relations between the three potentials, Ibn Sina stated the following:

“Although it is understood that the power to growth (*al-mumniyah*) – if it is found from the aspects we have mentioned – accompanies the power to nutritive (*al-ghadiyah*) and the power to procreation (*al-maulidah*) accompanies the power to growth. The function of the three powers is their dominance in creating a physical life and maintaining it through special activities. The first thing to master matter which is ready to receive life is the power of procreation, because it pre-wrapped matter in a form of purpose with service to the powers of growth and nutrition. If perfection of form is produced, then power is given to the power of growth, so that the power of growth dominates it with the service of nutrition and movement, while maintaining its shape according to the harmony of three levels, namely length, width, and depth, as a growth movement to the intended growth goal. The material power of the nutritive is then stopped and mastered. Procreation power is served without serving, while for the power to eat, it is served without serving. Power grows on the one hand served and on the other hand served. Even though the power of eating is not served in the faculties of the soul, it has used the four faculties of the natural faculties, namely, attraction, endurance, digestibility, and propulsion.”²⁷

The three potentials – namely the power to growth (*al-mumniyah*), the power to nutritive (*al-ghadiyah*), and the power to procreation (*al-maulidah*) – are present in the vegetative souls at first in the form of impulses and desires that it is part of the manifestation of love. There are several things contained in the vegetative soul, namely, the desire to be

²⁵ bn Sina, *Risalah fi al'Ishq...*, 68.

²⁶ Ibn Sina, *Risalah fi al'Ishq...*, 69

²⁷ Ibn Sina, *Ahwal al-Nafs wa Baqaiha wa Ma'adiha*, (Paris: Dar Bibliion: 2007), 153.

achieved, to get nutrition, to maintain survival, the desire to grow, to increase the proportion of the body in quantity, and the desire to reproduce. According to Ibn Sina, the three desires embody the love urge contained in vegetative souls.²⁸

Second, love for animal souls (*al-nafs alhayawaniyyah*) has two powers: the power of move (*al-quwwah al-muharrrikah*) and the power of perception (*al-quwwah al-mudrikah*). The power of movement is related to two things: first, the power of movement as a motive (*al-baithah*), namely, the desire and inclination towards something. It is this power which, if the image of an object that is desired or which is to be avoided, is depicted in the imagination, then that power leads to movement. From this, the power of lust (*al-quwwah al-shahwaniyyah*) evokes the movement to bring it closer to something imagined in order to take advantage of pleasure. Furthermore, there is also the power of anger (*al-quwwah al-ghadabiyyah*) which evokes a movement to reject something imagined either because something is dangerous or for the sake of gaining victory. This locomotion is dependent on the animal's ability to perceive, especially in terms of estimation, as a guide for the direction of movement that will be carried out later.²⁹

Ibn Sina believes that the movement ability possessed by animals is related to the power of perception (*al-quwwah al-idrak*) because every movement made by animals does not just happen but is based on active effort and is based on certain impulses to do something that comes from innate love. One of the other potentials possessed by the animal soul is its ability to perceive (*al-idrak*) the material objects that it encounters in its life experience. Information was obtained through perceptual activity. In this perceptual activity, there are two senses possessed by the animal soul: external and internal. Ibn Sina stated:

“As for the part of external sense perception, it functions by seeking familiarity with some sense objects in preference to others, and by finding some more repulsive than others. Otherwise, the animal will not be able to distinguish between visible events and keep from work and those that cause harm, and sensory perception abilities will be completely overblown. As for the part of sense perception which is internal, it functions by finding meanings in the quiet enjoyment of imagination and the like when they are present.”³⁰

The animal soul can perceive –through its external and internal senses– things which, according to itself, give pleasure, pain, or neither. When an object that he perceives gives a match or suitability, a sense of attraction from that object will be present in him; this can be called love. This understanding of love, which is caused by sensory perception factors, is in line with what was expressed by al-Ghazali that one of the basic principles of love is related to perception (*idrak*) and recognition (*ma'rifat*) which are produced through the sensing process. Each sense organ contains a suitable object and is based on its perceptual apparatus. For example, the eye is suitable for objects that are beautiful, the ears are suitable for hearing sweet sounds, the skin is suitable for soft objects, the nose is suitable for fragrant or fragrant objects, and the tongue is suitable for sweet tastes. Thus, everything that gives pleasure and serenity to the perceiver is his love. In contrast, the thing that causes suffering when perceived is the enemy.³¹

²⁸ Ibn Sina, *Risalah fi al-'Ishq...*, 70.

²⁹ Ibn Sina, *Ahwal al-Nafs...*, 159-160.

³⁰ al-Imam al-Ghazali, *Ihya 'Ulumi al-Din...*, 372.

³¹ Ibn Sina, *al-Najat fi al-Hikmah al-Mantiqiyah wa al-Thabi'iyah wa al-Ilahiyah*, ed. M. al-Kurdi, (Cairo: 1938), 198

Therefore, in the sense that everything that tends to bring pleasure, happiness, and compatibility to the perceiving subject can be called love (*al-ishq*). Through the external and internal senses, the animal soul can obtain certain information and images from objects outside itself, from which it gives pleasure when seen and brings longing when imagined. The imagined forms of objects will give the effect of motion, both impetus or motive (*al-baithah*), for their desire to meet something pleasant or happy. When the soul is far from something, it presents a deep sense of longing. Ibn Sina calls the movement of longing (*al-shauqiyah*). The second is the active movement (*al-fa'ilah*). Therefore, something in which there is an animal soul (*al-nafs al-hayawaniyah*) is certain to have two abilities, the ability to perceive (*al-quwwah al-mudrikah*) and the ability to move (*al-quwwah al-muharikah*). All animals, including humans, possess these abilities. However, humans have additional energy that is special and makes them different from other animals.

Specifically, Ibn Sina mentions that the love present in the animal soul arises from the estimative faculty (*al-wahmiyah*) from which the meanings of the objects he perceives are generated. In other words, when the subject objectifies something, in addition to producing a certain image form of the object (*al-surah*), certain meanings are also produced, such as fear, sadness, suffering, and happiness. That is, the process of objectification produces two things: first, a form, image, or concept (*al-surah*) which is produced by the formative faculty (*al-mutasawwirah*). Secondly, a connotative meaning or understanding (*al-ma'na*) from it is produced and kept by the estimative faculty (*al-wahmiyyah*). For Ibn Sina, love in the animal soul is not just a mere conception or image but a meaning. Ibn Sina states:

"In animals, there is also power that stores the meanings of objects perceived by the senses, such as that the wolf is the enemy, or the child is the child of the parents. This power is not a formative faculty (*al-mutasawwirah*) because the forms in the formative faculty do not sense the wolf's hostility and love for the child, but since the wolf's shape and the child's body. As for love and danger only reached by estimation (*al-wahmiyyah*), it is then stored in this faculty."³²

Furthermore, the form of love found in the animal soul is like the form of love in vegetative souls, but what makes it have a different position is that the animal soul has free will (*ikhtiyari*) in every action. This makes love in the animal soul higher and superior to that in vegetative souls. Although many people think that free will is only possessed by human entities that have rational souls, non-rational animals also have the power of free will in determining their every action, which is a form of divine attention (*al'inayah al-ilahiyah*).

The third is love in the rational soul (*al-nafs al-natiqah*). Humans own this soul only as a differentiator of animals. It has been explained earlier that there is the ability to perceive something in the animal soul that gives it pleasure or pain. Humans have this too. However, the difference between the two is that humans have several reasons for this. Regarding the perfection of the rational soul, Ibn Sina states:

"The perfection peculiar to the rational soul is when it becomes a realm of intelligence (*alaman 'aqliyan*) who longs for the return of the form of all things, the order that the mind can perceive in everything, and the goodness that radiates to everything, starting from the source of things, continues to all spiritual substances without conditions. He is somehow

³² Michael, E. Marmura, *Avicenna; The Metaphysics of The Healing* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 350.

connected with the various bodies, then the higher physical bodies with all their existences and potentialities. Then he really catches in him the embodiment of everything that exists."³³

Ibn Sina tried to find a clear distinction between the love in the animal soul and the love in the rational soul, although both can reside simultaneously in humans. The love in the animal soul dimension directs humans to simply love external physical appearances such as the desire to embrace, touch, and so on. However, humans must be able to subdue the animal qualities within them to obtain the purity of rational love. Ibn Sina states: "The purity of rational love will not be obtained when humans are not able to subdue the potential of their animal soul." This is because love based on pure rationality leads to true perfection, not to physical and temporary satisfaction.

Manifestation of God's Love

It was explained earlier that the existence of everything in this universe is a manifestation of God's love. Nothing escapes his love. On this basis, Ibn Sina concluded that everything that exists -animate or not- has the potential and energy of love because all of it comes from the overflow of God's love. According to Ibn Sina, love can be defined as the power or potential (*al-quwwah*) that flows in every entity of creation without exception. Verbatimally, Ibn Sina states: "*wa annahu li wujudih 'Ashiq an yunala tajallihi, wa anna wujud al-ashyaa tajallihi*" - that God is the one The lover (*al-'Ashiq*) whose manifestation all things come into being.³⁴

The existence of this universe is a result of God's love. The theory of emanation (*al-faid*), which Ibn Si initiated, states that the universe is the result of the creation of a 'Thinking God', then in this context, the universe is the result of the purest manifestation of love that comes from God. The universe is a manifestation of God (*tajalli*). This opinion was later expressed by Rumi that although love in the sense of 'desire' does not deserve to be attributed to God, in principle, God's love manifests hidden treasures into something visible and real. Love flows through veins of the universe. All actions and movements originate in love. Therefore, all forms and entities of this universe are nothing but reflections and overflows of his unique reality.

The form of God's love is His goodness and perfection, so everything that exists moves with longing to get to Him. Under such conditions, God, apart from being the subject of love, is also the object of love (*al-Ma'shuq*). Ibn Sina Said: "That Allah is the Beloved (*al-Ma'shuq*) and the lover (*al-'Ashiq*). And that it is a form of enjoyment when humans can catch (*idrak*) a good that is suitable or in accordance with it." Because Allah is the Highest Good (*al-Khair al-'Ala*), every creature entity moves towards Him. That is what Ibn Sina said that longing (*shauq*) is an active movement to perfect love.

According to Ibn Sina, God as the First Good (*al-Khair al-Awwal*) essentially manifests itself manifestly to all his creatures, without exception. However, if one of his creatures cannot witness the manifestation of God because something is hindered, then it is because that something has a deficiency or weakness that he cannot perfect himself. Self-imperfection is the cause of an obstructed or obstructed vision to witness the presence of God. Ibn Sina mentions that only clean, pure, and perfect souls can perceive the real presence of God.

Love as the Way of al-Arif to God

³³ Ibn Sina, *Risalah fi al-'Ishq ...*, 77.

³⁴ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*, (New York: State University of New York, 1983), 197.

God as Absolute Goodness (*al-Khair al-Mutlaq*) is both the subject and the object of the highest love (*al-Ashiq wa al-Ma'shuq*). As the subject of love (*al-Ashiq*), God made love for the basis or cause of creating all creatures in this universe. As the highest object of love (*al-Ma'shuq*), all existence (*al-maujudat*) has a natural desire to move towards the highest perfection, and the highest perfection is God Himself. Ibn Sina states:

"...That being which is too exalted to be subject to the governance must be the highest object of love because it must be the maximum in goodness. The highest subject of love is identical to the highest object of love, namely its high and sublime essence. The good loves the good through that attainment and penetration whereby it relates to it, and because the First Good penetrates it in eternal reality, its love for it is perfect and complete. Because there is no distinction among the divine qualities of Its Essence, love is here the essence and being purely and simply, that is, in the case of the Pure Good. In all beings, therefore, love is either the cause of their being or being and love are identical in them. It is thus evident that no being is devoid of love."³⁵

As mentioned earlier, every entity that exists in this world has a desire and tendency to move towards a higher perfection than it. Likewise, with the rational soul contained in humans, true perfection is when they can gain knowledge of the Absolute Good (*al-Khair al-Mutlaq*), which can also be called the First Cause. This First Cause is synonymous with Absolute Goodness because, in principle, this reality exists due to the First Cause and that reality cannot exist without Absolute Goodness. Every form of goodness that exists in this universe, without exception, comes from Absolute Goodness. In the book *al-Najat*, Ibn Sina describes goodness that exists in nature as a manifestation of God's love. By contrast, the absence of God's love manifests all kinds of evil in this world.

Love leads the human soul to understand its origin. The soul, which initially has complete perfection, loses it when it merges with the body. God dropped him from a higher place. Later in their journey, some of them feel comfortable residing in the physical body, while others try to escape to get a higher perfection. Related to this, Ibn Sina epically describes it in the poem of the soul, as follows:

"Out of her lofty home she hath come down; Upon thee, this white dove in all the pride; Of her reluctant beauty, veiled is she; From every eye eager to know her, though; In loveliness unshrouded radiant; Unwillingly she came, and yet perchance; Still more unwilling to be gone from thee; So she is torn by griefs; First she refrained, Being all unaccustomed; but at last, When she was firmly hit, she loved the use Of being neighbor to this arid waste. And now methinks she hath forgotten quite; The tents where once she dwelt, the far abodes; She was so little satisfied to leave; So, is now united with these depths, And parted from her sandy hills of yore, Her wings are heavy upon her, and she rests; Dejected mid these waymarks and mean mounds; Weeping (yet she remembered not her home Of yore), until her abundant tears flow; And near the hour to be upon her Way; Unto the broader plain, then perching high; Upon the topmost steep, she carolleth; For knowledge doth uplift the lowliest hearth: With ken of every hidden mystery; In all the world returning, still unstopped; The orifice of heeding; and it proves; Her coming down was necessary woe; That she might list to truth else all unheard. Why was she cast from her high peak to this depth? God brought her low, but for a purpose wise, that is concealed: E'en from the keenest mind and liveliest wit. If the tangled mesh impeded her, the narrow cage denied her wings to soar; Freely in heaven's high

³⁵ Ibn Sina, *Risalah fi al'Ishq...*, 66-67

ranges, after all; she was a lightning-flash that brightly glowed; Momently over the tents, and the was hid, as though its gleam was never glimpsed below.³⁶

The human soul will be perfect, and at the peak of the level, if it can know Absolute Goodness, then it establishes a special relationship (*al-idafah*) with Him. Absolute goodness is the real object of love for the soul. The human soul must then be able to imitate the qualities inherent in Absolute Goodness to increase the value of its perfection. These imitations take place for no other purpose than to enable an approach to the Absolute Good, and so this closeness produces excellence and perfection for the human soul. Therefore, Absolute Goodness must always be loved by all souls who have divine nature. This kind of love is in them without ever stopping because they are always perfect or in preparation for perfection.

Every being in this universe –whether animate or inanimate– loves the Absolute Good with innate love within him. Absolute goodness manifests itself to all beings who love him. In this case, however, the manifestation of Absolute Goodness varies in degree, as does its relationship with Him. The highest degree of approximation to Him is accepting the manifestation of the Absolute Good in its full, that is, in a perfect way. This is what Sufis call unification or unity (*al-ittihad*). Such a reality can only be reached by a rational soul with a pure level of intelligence.

“Thus, it transforms into an intelligible world parallel to the existing world. Parallel to the existing world. He will witness the Absolute Truth (*al-Haq al-Mutlaq*), Absolute Goodness (*al-Khair al-Mutlaq*), and Real Beauty (*al-Jamal al-Haqq*). He will be one with Him.”³⁷

This concept aligns with what al-Farabi said that the true form of love is in the one he emits emanatively. The One Himself is a common object of love for all beings. Love for the First causes man to attain a certain relation to separate intellect. Love connects the human soul to God.³⁸ Absolute goodness never manifests itself, except in a pure, immiscible essence. His sublime essence manifests itself in the 'form of the intellect.' The divine soul in humans and angels is not worthy of being called divine unless they win or gain knowledge of Absolute Pure Goodness, as perfection will not be associated with these souls unless they understand the causes of intelligence. There is no way of perceiving them unless they are preceded by knowledge of their true causes, especially The First Cause.

Therefore, Ibn Sina's love is not just a feeling dimension, but is also based on knowledge (*al-ma'rifah*). The lover must clearly know what he likes and the direction of the intended love. For Ibn Sina, the knowledge possessed by humans through their intelligence comes from Absolute Goodness, namely God. God, in this case, is understood as pure intellectual, pure goodness, and pure love, who at the same time is the Absolute One. He manifests to Himself, and then all rational human souls receive an overflow of knowledge that makes them know themselves and God as Mandatory and Absolute Goodness. Thus, love, knowledge, and goodness flow from God to all humankind (Janssens 1997:462). Ikhwan al-Safa also expressed this understanding:

"Know that the ultimate goal of the manifestation of love in the disposition of the soul and love of the soul for all bodies and their perception of beauty and adornment of the body, as well as their longing for all forms of various objects of the soul, all these are warnings to him

³⁶ Ibn Sina, *Qasidah al'Ainiyyah fi al-Nafs dalam Ahmad Amin*, Faidl al-Khatir, Juz IX, (London: Hindawi Foundation CIC, 2012), 183-188 in Arthur J. Arberry, *Avicenna on Theology*, (London;Butler & Tanner, 1951), 77.

³⁷ Ibn Sina, *al-Najat...*, 328

³⁸ Binyamin Abrahamov, *Divine Love in Islamic Mysticism...*, 18.

so that he is aware of heedlessness and ignorance, cultivates the mind. and the increase and increase for him from various physical-sensory things to things that are psychic-rational; from the material level to spiritual beauty and is a testament to the knowledge of its substance, its elemental glory, its natural beauty, and its ultimate goodness.”³⁹

With their rational soul, humans can relate directly to Absolute Goodness; then, they will automatically obtain what is called true love or perfect love (*al-'ishq al-haqiqi*). Thus, he may have become the object of love for the Absolute Good in such a way. In this case, Ibn Sina quotes Hadith Qudsi but it is incomplete: that a servant if so and so then he loves Me, and I love him too (*Inna Allah Ta'ala yaqulu; inna al-'abd idha kana kadha was kadha 'ashaqani was 'ashaqtuhu*).

If the rational soul contained in humans has found the object of its true love, namely, the entity that is Best and Perfect, then it is called the love of people who are *khawas*. The love of the *Khawas* goes beyond physical and sensory things. He will always look for something else behind the goodness and beauty of the physical entity he encounters. Ibn Sina also says that when the human soul has been able to know and find the Absolute Goodness, it feels a tremendous longing and desire to be united with Him. This is the highest peak in the level of love in the existing soul entity.

For Ibn Sina, true love, which is truly pure and divine, presupposes the existence of a human soul that only wants and needs God, nothing else. He does not want anything other than Himself. The desire to enter heaven and be farthest from hellfire, for example, is not the reason for a human being to love God as Absolute Beauty and Goodness. More firmly, in *Isharat was Tanbihat*, Ibn Sina states that true love is the presence of pleasure or happiness felt by the subject of love because of the presence of the form of the essence of a substance within him (*al-ibtihaj bi tas awwuri hadirati dhat ma*) – not because of something else. That happiness will be perfect when longing moves towards the object of love, and then arrives and connects with it.

His love for *al-arif*, in the above sense, is in line with what was stated by Abu Nars al-Sarraj, as quoted by Harun Nasution, that divine love is divided into three levels: ordinary love. Namely, he who always remembers God using dhikr likes to mention his name, always praises Him, and feels happy when having a dialogue with him. Second, the love of *al-Siddiq*, namely, the love of people who know God, includes the attributes of the Almighty attached to Him, such as Greatness, Power, and Knowledge. This kind of love can remove the veil that separates him from God so that he can see secrets that exist in God. At this level, love will make him let go of his ego, because his heart is filled with love and longing for God. The third is the love of the *'arif*, namely the love of people who know God. Once he knows God, love arises. Love at this level can be said to go beyond the feeling of love itself because what he sees and feels is no longer love but the self he loves. In other words, the individual who loves and is loved will become a unified whole.⁴⁰

Through true love, between the *arif* and God will be connected (*al-wusul*) in a certain form of relationship, as explained in the previous section about the concept of *wusul* experienced by an *'arif*. The relationship between the lover and the beloved is also expressed by a Sufi named al-Qasim ibn Muhammad: the desire of lovers is to be connected (*wusul*)

³⁹ Mulyadhi Kartanegara [ed], *Rasail Ikhwan al-Safa...*, 278.

⁴⁰ Harun Nasution, *Falsafat dan Mistisisme dalam Islam...*, 55.

with their will. Those who are afraid are *wusul* from the fear of their place of security. All of these are good. They are strongest in the body, and the highest position is in goodness.

D. Conclusion

Several conclusions can be drawn from this description. First, according to Ibn Sina, every entity in this universe (*al-maujudat*) – whether animate or inanimate – possesses love to varying degrees. This love emanates from God, who embodies Absolute Goodness and Perfection (*al-Khair was al-Kamal al-Mutlaq*). Love (*al-ishq*), according to Ibn Sina, is the driving force behind the existence of everything in the universe. Specifically, God is the lover (*al-Ashiq*) whose manifestation brings all things into being. Second, every entity in the universe naturally strives towards a better and more perfect state. This longing desire is inherent to every being. God, as Absolute Goodness and Perfection, becomes the ultimate object of love (*al-Ma'shuq*) for all the entities. They all move towards Him, seeking to unite (*ittihad*) with Him. However, Ibn Sina notes that not all entities can achieve union with Absolute Perfection; only those who possess true love (*al-ishq al-haqiqi*) and can purify and perfect their souls through knowledge and virtuous actions can connect (*al-wusul*) with Absolute Perfection. Lastly, the 'Arif cleanses and perfects his rational soul. This individual possesses a profound knowledge of Absolute Goodness and Perfection. Through true love (*al-ishq al-haqiqi*) and an understanding of the Essence of God (*ma'rifatullah*) via the rational soul (*al-nafs al-natiqah*), the 'Arif can achieve a direct and continuous connection (*al-wusul*) with God. This state of connection results in the highest form of happiness, which Ibn Sina describes as intellectual happiness (*al-ladhat al-aqliyyah*):

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