

LOVE AND THE CAPACITY TO LOVE

AN ONTOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF LOVE ACCORDING TO IBN SINA AND THOMAS AQUINAS

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Abstract:

This paper will elaborate on the different concepts of love as offered by Thomas Aquinas and Ibn Sina; two prominent thinkers representing the Christian and Islamic tradition. Risālah fī al-‘ishq (The Treatise on Love) of Ibn Sina is comparable – in terms of theological and philosophical approaches – to the Aquinas’ treatment of love in Summa Theologiae II-IIae q.23, a.2. I argue that since Ibn Sina’s ontological definition of love is related tightly to his cosmogony, then there is no rigid distinction between the love of the Pure Being and the contingent beings. Love acts as a “medium” of unification and perfection towards the Pure Being. The different levels of love are already determined in the contingent beings according to the principle of harmonia during the emanative process. For Aquinas, love is present only in the rational being as it is a grace of God, the Holy Spirit himself. But this similar notion of Aristotelian harmonia in Aquinas (1) would never be able to blur the wide, apparent discrepancy between God and human beings. (2) Through the model of rational love as an intellectual counsel, we can see that there is no sense of determinism on Aquinas’ concept of rational love.

Keywords:

rational love, divine love, human love, Risālah fī al-‘ishq, ontological analysis

INTRODUCTION

There are many elements in the word ‘love’: individual, communal, religious, and secular. Those elements are each motivated by different subjects and situations, by various desires and wills. As a common human experience, love is often interpreted as a ‘warm’ sensation from emotion or sentiment. For this reason, love is also often contrasted with the ‘cold’ calculation of ‘ratio’ or knowledge. The intertwined relationship between love and knowledge might rightfully represent the two major approaches in today’s moral cognition. Some moral philosophers consider the role of love (and other faculties of the appetites) in shaping our knowledge. Yet, some other philosophers choose to recognize the independence of both faculties in moral cognition.¹

This paper will investigate Thomas Aquinas’ and Ibn Sina’s concept of rational love concerning its ontological nature and its theological presumptions. Both thinkers place this ontological issue of love as an essential part of their writings. We can understand this since both religious traditions emphasize the role of love as a moral basis in their doctrines of relationship with God and with neighbors.² This paper will specifically analyze the Ibn Sina’s *Risālah fī al-‘ishq* compared with *Summa Theologiae* (hereafter: *Summa* or *ST*), II-IIae q. 23, a. 2. In these two texts, we can find the fundamental thoughts on the nature of human capacity to love. Like most of the comparative research, I choose the method of maximizing similarities and differences among the compared variables to find the interconnectedness and the disparities between these two scholars.³ This comparative work will start first by (1) a short clarification on the word ‘love’ in Latin and Arabic terminology. There are some complications in this word since the English term for ‘love’ has a broader sense in Latin and Arabic traditions. This clarification is essential not only for understanding the texts but also to justify the philosophical assessment between the two different traditions. I will then (2) explore the ontological analysis on the Divine-being as the source of

¹ One of the most debated philosophical themes in the moral psychology’s empirical researches is the arguments among the sentimentalists against rationalists concerning the nature of moral judgment. Cf. Jillian Craigie, “Thinking and Feeling: Moral Deliberation in a Dual-process Framework,” *Philosophical Psychology* 24, Nr. 1 (2011) 53-56.

² Cf. Mt 22: 34-40; Mk 12: 28-34; Lk 10:2 - Quran 2:177; Quran 21:90

³ Malcolm L. Goggin, “The ‘Too Few Cases/Too Many Variables’ Problem in Implementation Research,” *Political Research Quarterly* 39, Nr. 2 (1986) 333-34.

knowledge and love both for Aquinas and Ibn Sina. We will see how the different cosmological concepts affect human nature and his/her capacity to love God. (3) The notion of will and passion will be delivered next as a point of departure for understanding the deterministic and indeterministic character of love for Aquinas and Ibn Sina. I will further elaborate these descriptions with the discussion of passion, will, and love.

TERMINOLOGY

To avoid unnecessary confusion in this comparative work, I propose to use the generic English word ‘love’ as the translation of both the Latin *caritas* and the Arabic *قشع* (*‘ishq*). Ibn-Sīnā’s word *‘ishq* can also be translated into the Latin *dilectio*. Dilection is a word that Aquinas often uses in an interchangeable manner when he refers to ‘love’ as *amor* or *caritas*. In the Latin text of ST, IIa IIae, q. 23, a. 2., the Latin term *caritas* is translated into English as ‘charity,’ which in general lexicon has a similar meaning with ‘love.’ We understand the word *caritas* in relation to the other two different Latin vocabularies: *amor* and *dilectio*. At ST Ia IIae, q. 26, a. 3, Aquinas delivers this question: “Is love (*amor*) the same as dilection (*dilectio*)?” He answers that the words “love, dilection, charity and friendship” (*amor, dilectio, caritas, amicitia*) are “four words that refer, in a way, to the same thing.” Yet, the word *amo* and *amor* in the context of medieval time has a specific meaning in the Vulgate, a reference which Aquinas is familiar with. According to *Lewis and Short’s Latin Dictionary*, *amo* is used 51 times in the Vulgate, while *amor* emerges 20 times. In contrast, *diligo* (and *dilectus*) are used 422 times, *dilectio* 43 times, and *caritas* 101 times.⁴ *Amo* is less used in Vulgate probably because it has another meaning “to have sex with,” and its adjective form could be used to describe “animals in heat.”⁵ In his introduction to the translation of the *Commentary on the Sentences*, Kwasniewski writes: “The basic difference (between these terms) is that *amicitia* is like a habit, whereas *amor* and *dilectio* are actions or passions, and *caritas* can be taken either way.”⁶ In the etymological sense,

⁴ *Lewis and Short’s Latin Dictionary*, s.v. “Amo,” <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0059:entry=amo&highlight=amo> (access 02.08.2020).

⁵ Tali Folkins, “Amor is not a Nice Word,” *Opening the Vita Nuovo Blog* (August 2017). <https://vitanuovosite.wordpress.com/2017/02/08/amor-is-not-a-nice-word/> (access 02.07.2020).

⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *On Love and Charity: Readings from the “Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard,”* ed. Peter Kwasniewski (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press,

it seems that there are distinctions made for these equivalent words, but both Lombard and Aquinas use these terms fluidly and synonymously. Kwasniewski insists one ought not to be troubled to translate these four terms into the English word ‘love.’⁷

In Arabic, there are at least two standard terms for ‘love.’ The Arabic word **حُب** (*hubb*) is widely used in various backgrounds: ardent love, love between spouses, love between members of a family, love between human and God.⁸ The Arabic word **قشع** (*‘ishq*) – the term specifically mentioned in the discussed *Risālah* of Ibn Sina – has a restricted meaning of “passionate love” or “desire” and generally refer to the love in a romantic relationship. But there is also another explanation from Capezzone who argues that “Avicenna [Ibn Sina] identifies in *‘ishq* a propulsive and dynamic force that holds the whole universe; through desire it drives and elevates the soul.”⁹ I would like to point that this paper is aware of the difficulties of translating the complete Arabic sense of what *‘ishq* is in English term. While being aware of these specific meanings of *‘ishq*, I found that Fackenheim loosely translates this word as “love” in his translation of *Risālah fī al-‘Ishq*. In the more inclusive approach of Ibn Sina’s works, I believe that we can justify the translation of *‘ishq* to English word “love” as long as we know the different contexts of the passages being used.¹⁰

THE DIVINE NATURE OF LOVE

Despite the different meanings of the word ‘love,’ Aquinas and Ibn Sina agree that human capacity to love comes from the divine being. This love comes through the emanation process for Ibn Sina and the grace of God for Aquinas. Ibn Sina emphasizes love in the cosmological sense as the medium of unity between humans and God. While agreeing on the divine nature of love, Thomas Aquinas has a different ontological

2008), xxi-ii.

⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *On Love and Charity: Readings from the.*, xxiii

⁸ *Cambridge English Arabic Dictionary*, s.v. “Love,” <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english-arabic/love> (access 02.07.2020).

⁹ Leonardo Capezzone, *Encyclopedia of Mediterranean Humanism*, s.v. “Ishq,” <http://www.encyclopedie-humanisme.com/ishq>. (access 02.07.2020).

¹⁰ Please also note that it is the author’s choice to translate the Arabic word **قشع** (*‘ishq*) simply into “love” in this research paper as I use only the Fackenheim’s translation of Ibn Sina’s *Risālah fī al-‘ishq*. The translation of *Summa Theologiae* used in this paper is taken from the *New Advent*.

standpoint from what Ibn Sina thinks. Aquinas treats the love between the creature and God as one of a part to whole, not in Ibn Sina's pantheistic way, but rather in terms of the "doctrine of participation," by which each creature has in a partial form of perfection that is found in the complete or perfect form only in God. In my opinion, Ibn Sina understands love mainly in the natural-cosmological context, while Aquinas frames his understanding of love more in the Christian theological understanding of God. This different approach would later affect their concepts of what love is and how human beings would have the capacity to love.

Ibn Sina: Love as the Medium of Unity between Human and God

The concept of love in *Risālah fī al-'ishq* should be framed in Ibn Sina's cosmological conception. In the relation between God and the universe, wherein all things are known by the Pure Good because of the necessity of its existence, love then belongs to His essence alone. The first chapter of *Risālah fī al-'Ishq* shows the Highest Being, whose qualities are Pure, Good, Great, and Love, is above all creatures.¹¹ Pure goodness is inherent in the Highest Being that does not need matter for its existence. All "lower" contingent beings – the creations – as the results of this emanating Pure Good, seek and desire life in material reality. Anwar writes that, for Ibn Sina, "the overflowing emanation process results from God's intellection of His essence that radiates the Universal Intellect, Soul, Nature, Body and the multiplicity of the world."¹²

Ibn Sina believes that goodness is built upon the Pure Good's two primary characteristics: the independence from material contingencies and the immunity from nothingness. Despite their being created in these material contingencies, all other beings possess inborn love for the Highest Being, the supreme subject and object of love. This Highest Being is the origin of the cosmos and the destination where the universe returns to its perfection. Fackhenheim writes that "Ibn Sina frames this movement towards perfection in the traditional Platonic division of the soul into the appetitive, animal, and rational parts. Each part of the human soul has a specific type and particular objects of love: (1) sexual gratification and food for the appetitive part; (2) the victory, supremacy, and revenge for the animal-

¹¹ Ibn Sina, *On Treatise of Love (Risālah fī al-'ishq)*, trans. Emil L. Fackenheim, *Mediaeval Studies* 7, Nr. 1 (1945) 212-214.

¹² Etin Anwar, "Ibn Sina's Philosophical Theology of Love: A Study of the *Risālah fī al-'ishq*," *Islamic Studies* 42, Nr. 2 (2003): 334.

emotional part; and (3) the knowledge and the acquisition of perfection for the last part.”¹³ This explains the possibility of “lesser” good already present in the human and his natural existence. Through this active “process of loving,” the contingent beings seek greater involvement in goodness in real life.¹⁴ Rational love, as a consequence of the emanation, is present in *all* created beings. So, rational love is not a privilege of the human-beings only. Rundgren explains that inanimate beings possess love, which is the cause of their being. He points out that Ibn Sina’s *Risālah* holds the view that the vegetative forms (or souls) show their love in their desire for nutrition, growth, and procreation.¹⁵ Denomy further analyzes that love in the animal soul, according to *Risālah fī al-’Ishq*, “is evident in its discrimination of what is pleasing and displeasing for external sense-perception. [It is also evident in] its enjoyment of pleasant imaginations and its striving towards such through its internal sense faculties, and in its desire for mastery and avoidance of weakness in its irascible faculty.”¹⁶ In other words, emanating rational love from the Pure Good is present in all beings without exception due to an overflowing good of the Highest Being.

However, Ibn Sina does not consider the contingent and material love as the Pure Good itself. Although we can sense his pantheistic approach on defining and explaining the position of love in the order of the emanating Pure Good, Ibn Sina notes that all loves, except for spiritual love and the love of God, belong to the perishing nature. For Ibn Sina, “the genuine end of all love is to lead the soul away from the sensual-bodily realm to the spiritual one, away from mere bodily accessory and appeal to the spiritual world’s elegance.”¹⁷ From this point of view, we may further ask: “How could this rational love, coming from the emanating Pure Good, that exists in the lower parts of contingent beings be perished?” There is a tension of dissenting concepts of rational love as being divine in its essence and as being parts of the perishable reality. It seems to me that

¹³ Ibn Sina, *On Treatise of Love (Risālah fī al-’ishq)*, trans. Emil L. Fackenheim, *Mediaeval Studies* 7, Nr. 1 (1945) 210.

¹⁴ Ali Altaf Mian, “Love in Islamic Philosophy” in *The Routledge Handbook of Love in Philosophy*, ed. Adrienne Martin (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 402.

¹⁵ Joseph Norment Bell, “Avicenna’s Treatise on Love and the Nonphilosophical Muslim Tradition,” *Der Islam* 63, Nr. 1 (1986): 76-77.

¹⁶ Joseph Norment Bell, 76-77.

¹⁷ Ibn Sina, *On Treatise of Love (Risālah fī al-’ishq)*, trans. Emil L. Fackenheim, *Mediaeval Studies* 7, Nr. 1 (1945) 210.

Ibn Sina holds a different kind of category when he talks about rational love. While maintaining its divine nature from the Pure being, rational love can also be not so pure in essence when present in appetitive and animal faculties. Ibn Sina writes that:

*“Rational love can, therefore, not be pure except when the animal faculty is altogether subdued. With respect to the desire for conjugal union, it is fitting that a lover who entices the object of his love with this purpose in mind should be suspected, except if his need has a rational purpose, i.e., if his purpose is the propagation of the species. ... It is permissible and may find approval only in the case of a man with either his wife or female slave.”*¹⁸

In *Risālah fi al-’Ishq*, while maintaining the platonic divisions of the Soul, Ibn Sina also puts great emphasis on the inborn human desires and actions of love in various levels of the soul as positive efforts to unite with God. Rational love, even in the “lower” parts of the soul – i.e., the vegetative and the animal parts – is inseparable from the Pure Good as the source and destination of every human being. Yet, at the same time, this rational and divine love is not incorruptible to the perishing effects of the lower parts of the physical reality. All kinds and levels of love in each part of the human soul always continue to exist since it is a perfection offered by the Pure Good to lead the contingent beings toward Itself. All beings are in God’s plan to strive for perfection to achieve the state of goodness. These ontological presumptions are essential to bridge the gap between the essence of rational love and the corruptibility of the material reality. This is why the acts of loving in kissing and sexual intercourse mentioned in chapter V of this *Risālah*, which belong to the animal part of the soul, are justified as ways of this unification when the act serves the Divine and rational purpose of the species preservation. These actions represent the desire for the preservation that is also shared in the animal-realm.

I think we can understand Ibn Sina’s conflicting concept of the “corruptible rational love” if we look further at how all parts of the contingent beings – even from the so-called “lower parts” – desires “for the perfection of each being fits into the universe and God’s nature. This desire is shaped by design so that no entity is devoid of its perfection.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Ibn Sina, *On Treatise of Love (Risālah fī al-’ishq)*, trans. Emil L. Fackenheim, *Mediaeval Studies* 7, Nr. 1 (1945) 222. Italics added.

¹⁹ Etin Anwar, “Ibn Sina’s Philosophical Theology of Love: A Study of the *Risālah fī al-’ishq*,” *Islamic Studies* 42, Nr. 2 (2003): 334.

In my opinion, these dynamic and teleological elements of good – both in necessary and contingent beings – successfully distinguish *Risālah fī al-‘ishq* from other Islamic works before Ibn Sina. Before this *Risālah*, there were already al-Kindi’s noteworthy treatise on love, the thirty-sixth treatise of the *Encyclopedia* of the Brethren of Purity, and some scattered references to this subject in al-Farabi’s *Theology of Aristotle*.²⁰ But in the great works of these preceding Muslim philosophers, the radical contrast between the “high” spiritual being and the “low” natural beings are present everywhere. In this platonic setting, this material world’s beauty is considered merely as inferior compared to the idea of beauty itself. When God is regarded as the true and the highest beauty, then the ‘external-material’ beauty is considered an obstacle to reaching God. In the *Theology of Aristotle*, for example, love to the external beauty, say of a woman, is understood as a disposition aroused by “sorcery” or “seduction” (*sīhr*).²¹ Ibn Sina seems to shift from these previous platonic rigid distinctions of the idea and matter. This *Risālah* presents a more Aristotelian concept of *harmonia* to explain the unitive relationship between the Creator and the universe.

At the end of this discussion, I would like to point two distinct characters of love, as understood by Ibn Sina in this *Risālah*. First, in terms of ontological definition, love in *Risālah fī al-‘ishq* can be considered as “part of the Pure Good” that is natural and inherent in human being and his/her actions as the consequence of the emanating Pure Good. In terms of function, love in *Risālah fī al-‘ishq* serves more as a “medium” that unites the soul of the human being with the Highest Being.

Aquinas: Love as the Participation Through Grace

There are two main Aquinas’ arguments on love. Firstly, love is the crowning virtue in the system of virtues. Secondly, love is infused in us by God.²² This section will start with the latter premise since it accommodates the common ground for the ontological comparisons with Ibn Sina’s thoughts on the divine source of love. Like Ibn Sina, Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae*, IIa IIae q.23, a.2 finds the study on love fits into the broader interpretation of God and creation. In this part of

²⁰ Etin Anwar, “Ibn Sina’s Philosophical Theology...”, 208-210.

²¹ Etin Anwar, “Ibn Sina’s Philosophical Theology...”, 209.

²² Jeffrey Wattles, “Aquinas on Love,” *Living in Truth, Beauty, and Goodness*, <https://sites.google.com/a/kent.edu/jwattles/home/ethics/aquinas-on-love> (access 25.07.2020)

Summa Theologiae, love is directly discussed in God and human beings' relationship, not with any other order of creations like what we have seen in the *Risālah fī al-'ishq*. Regarding the nature of love in human being, Aquinas writes:

“Love (charity) is not something created in the soul but is the Holy Ghost Himself dwelling in the mind. Nor does he mean to say that this movement of love whereby we love God is the Holy Ghost Himself, but that this movement is *from the Holy Ghost without any intermediary habit*, whereas other virtuous acts are from the Holy Ghost by means of the habits of other virtues, for instance, the habit of faith or hope or of some other virtue: and this he said on account of the excellence of charity.”²³

Love, for Aquinas, is not the result of an emanation of the Pure Good. Love is *not created* and therefore is identical with the Holy Spirit Himself. For Aquinas, love is not a specific part of the Pure Good, like what Ibn Sina understands. Wandinger reads Aquinas ontological definition of God in the framework of “grace.” Since God infuses love in humans as a gift, “a gift that is a foretaste of glory, also known as ‘grace’ and the Holy Spirit Himself, in turn, transforms the horizon of the human spirit. The infinite formal object of the human spirit is shaped by grace.”²⁴ Consequently, “our intellect and will – the way we experience ourselves, the world, and God – have been transformed by grace.”²⁵ In short, love is the uncreated grace and is “the Holy Spirit Himself, who infuses joy in the will. The soul’s joy, flowing over into the body, fills it with happiness in the form of health and incorruptible vigor.”²⁶ Love is God’s grace, which is divinely placed in the human soul and helps us to will and to do the right thing.

In a more specific explanation, Aquinas contends that *charity*, “that love of God, by which He is loved as the object of bliss” is “impossible without faith.”²⁷ We must therefore inquire about what constitutes

²³ Thomas Aquinas, “*Summa Theologiae*, IIa-IIae, q. 23. a. 2,” italics added, <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3023.htm> (access 11.07.2020)

²⁴ Nikolaus Wandinger, “Karl Rahner on Nature and Grace,” *Der Innsbrucker Theologische Leseraum*, accessed August 15, 2020. <https://www.uibk.ac.at/theol/leseraum/texte/341.html>

²⁵ Nikolaus Wandinger, “Karl Rahner on Nature and Grace,”

²⁶ Thomas Aquinas, “*Summa Theologiae*, Ia IIae, q. 59, a. 5,” <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/2059.html> (access 11.07.2020)

²⁷ Thomas Aquinas, “*Summa Theologiae*, Ia IIae, q. 65. a.1,” <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/2065.html> (access 11.07.2020)

“faith” for Aquinas. Aquinas asserts that “explicit faith in the mysteries of Christ,” especially those promulgated by the Church, was required “after grace had been revealed.”²⁸ Of course, this interpretation bounces another critical question: “Doesn’t it mean that those who do not have faith in Christ, and His Church cannot truly love nor have love?”²⁹ I decide not to go in this soteriological direction for the sake of clarity. Instead, I choose to return to the previous ontological explanation of love in Aquinas to start paralleling it with Ibn Sina.

Aquinas’ concept of love is different from the idea of love we find in Ibn Sina’s *Risālah fi al-’Ishq*. For Aquinas, the ontological definition of love cannot be separated from the discourse of God’s grace and its relationship to human-being. Since love, for Aquinas, is such a quality of rational beings, it is not an inclusive quality shared among other orders of creations. Although Aquinas seems to keep the different levels and distinctions in the soul, he clarifies that due to this distinctive rational element of love, then the notion of pantheism we sense in Ibn Sina is false. Love, for Aquinas, is *a formative and abiding gift* that should be accepted through faith, and at the same time, must also be known through the reason.³⁰ So, love is not only – in a sense – a “medium” of unification between God and *for all kinds of creations* as Ibn Sina may understand it.

In the next part, I will consider Aquinas’ conceptions of reason, will, and how love may play in these parts of the human soul. For Aquinas, the goal and ultimate perfection of the human soul is by knowledge and by love to transcend the entire created order and to attain the first principle, who is God. This once again, I argue, is possible since love for Aquinas is considered as a rational gift from God, who although participate in grace, is still distinct from the human being. From the following discussion, I will later show this dimension of “internality” of grace is quite similar to Ibn Sina’s “internal” dimension of love due to emanation.

²⁸ Thomas Aquinas, “*Summa Theologiae*, IIa IIae, q. 2. a. 7,” <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3002.html> (access 11.07.2020)

²⁹ Cf. Gerald J. Beyer, “The Love of God and Neighbor according to Aquinas: An Interpretation,” *New Blackfriars* 84, Nr. 98 (2003) 118.

³⁰ Thomas Aquinas, “*Summa Theologiae*, IIa IIae, q. 2. a. 4,” <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3002.html> (access 11.07.2020).

WILL, PASSION AND THE PRIMACY OF THE RATIONAL LOVE

Following Christian tradition, Aquinas holds that love (or *caritas*) has the primacy among all other virtues. In Aquinas' words: "love is the *form* of all virtues ... in morals the form of an act is taken chiefly from the end."³¹ Ultimately all virtues have love as their real end. This means that love directs the acts of all other virtues to the last end and, consequently, gives the form or perfect completeness to all other actions of virtues. This is easier to understand if we once again refer to the ontological relationship between love and the Holy Spirit, as we have seen in the previous section. In other words, love is the efficient cause and has the primacy of all virtues for its being the Holy Spirit Himself. But how does this kind of "divine" love work in human realms? This is an important question to answer since, in the discussion of the human soul, Aquinas – like Ibn Sina – finds that "love" can also be understood as part of the passion, of the appetitive and animal power. If for Ibn Sina, rational love might have the perishable nature when it comes to the appetitive and animal faculties, Aquinas that the rational love can never be perished. Aquinas tries to resolve the question on how God's grace works in these different levels of human soul by analyzing the complicated threads of passion, will, and intellect. I want to utilize Aquinas "mechanism" of knowledge and intellectual love as starting points to recognize the different approach done by Ibn Sina in his *Risālah fi al-'Ishq*. I will also show that these differences would later open possible interpretation of Ibn Sina's love as somehow deterministic compared to the Aquinas'.

Aquinas and the "Internal Mechanism" of Intellectual Love

Up to this point, we have seen that Aquinas defines love as both the primary virtue and uncreated grace: the Holy Spirit himself. This Divine and rational nature of love are inherent in his theory of creation and his understanding of who God is. But at the other part of *Summa*, we can also see the contrasting definition and origin of love. Aquinas also seems to accept that the common understanding of love as something that we have in our feeling faculty instead of the rational faculty. This critical part of *Summa* points that:

"Accordingly, we must assert that *to love which is an act of the appetitive power*, even in this state of life, *tends to God first, and*

³¹ Thomas Aquinas, "*Summa Theologiae*, IIa IIae, q. 23. a. 8," <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3023.html> (access 11.07.2020).

flows on from Him to other things, and in this sense, charity loves God immediately, and other things through God. On the other hand, with regard to knowledge, it is the reverse, since we know God through other things, either as a cause through its effects, or by way of preeminence of negation as Dionysius states...³²

To understand this text, we need to look further at Aquinas' complex ideas about the nature of the human soul. Love is related to the layers of the human soul: "(1) the intellect (perceptive, apprehensive, cognitive), (2) the will (motive, appetitive, conative), and (3) the passions or feelings (sensitive, emotive)."³³ Aquinas formulates his account of will primarily on the Aristotelian concept of rational appetite (*boulêsis*) in its association with reason and emotions. The will is the second constituent of the intellectual soul, while the appetite corresponds to the intellect itself. In general, Aquinas understands the will as "the faculty whose object is the good."³⁴ Aquinas agreed with Aristotle that human beings "who are endowed with both intellect and will are hardwired to certain general ends ordered to the most general goal of goodness. Will is *rational* desire: we cannot move towards that which does not appear to us at the time to be good."³⁵

Utilizing appetitive powers, we seek and desire things; we strive to unite ourselves (in various ways) with them. They are consequent upon knowledge. "Some inclination follows every form."³⁶ The will seeks not any particular good thing, but rather a general/universal sense of goodness. The act of determining which particular good to pursue is the task of the intellect, which evaluates judgments about certain things, events, or states of affairs. It then presents these to the will as good. In translation from the universal to the particular, the intellect must

³² Thomas Aquinas, "*Summa Theologiae*, IIa IIae, q. 27. a. 4," italics added, <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3027.html> (access 11.07.2020).

³³ The Information Philosopher, s.v. "Thomas Aquinas," <http://www.informationphilosopher.com/solutions/philosophers/aquinas/> (access 15.08.2020).

³⁴ Ralph McInerny, *Ethica Thomistica: The Moral Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 69.

³⁵ Timothy O'Connor and Christopher Franklin, s.v. "Free Will," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/freewill/> (access 18.08.2020).

³⁶ Thomas Aquinas, "*Summa Theologiae*, I, q.80, a.1," <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/1080.html> (access 11.07.2020).

depend on the *phantasms*, and here sin becomes possible.³⁷ Phantasms are images produced by the imagination which represent the particular material objects perceived by the senses. To know an individual thing, the intellect must revert to phantasm. In formulating a particular judgment, the intellect must depend on the imagination, and here the possibility of corruption begins.³⁸ Failure to choose the good impede the intellect's "movement" from universal to particular. Passion works in several ways to impede the transition from habitual, universal knowledge to actual, particular knowledge:

1. passion distracts attention from the prohibiting universal (tensions between sense appetite and intellect),
2. passions incline to the contrary of what is known in the universal,
3. passion alters the condition of the body, which in turn makes the image of the forbidden object more attractive.³⁹

For Aquinas, the will is not independent of the intellect. Intellect and will "are engaged in dynamic, complex interaction, with multiple stages between initial perception and cognition by the intellect to the final action of the will, with occasional interruptions or overrides by the passions."⁴⁰ Aquinas' doctrine of knowledge, although rooted in the senses' external data, is nonetheless a capacity to be open to the infinite being. This ability to transcend particular beings allows man to think metaphysically and internally to analyze the general structure of being necessary for the world's actual condition known through the senses.

Until this point, Aquinas has shown us that love as *amor* could mean the desire or passion of the lower human faculty. What he means by that word *amor* usually applies both on an emotive level – love as a passion – and on a conative level. But at various parts of *Summa*, Aquinas also uses

³⁷ Bonnie Kent, *Virtues of the Will* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 156-157.

³⁸ Bonnie Kent, *Virtues of the Will.*, 157.

³⁹ In *Summa Theologiae Ia Ilae* q.25 a.2, Aquinas writes: "Good and evil are the object of the concupiscible faculty. Now good naturally precedes evil; since evil is the privation of good. Wherefore all the passions, the object of which is good, are naturally before those, the object of which is evil, - that is to say, each precedes its contrary passion: because the quest of a good is the reason for shunning the opposite evil." It seems that Aquinas agrees with Augustine in formulating love as the cause of all passions. The primacy of love is a feature of our being ordered - as desiring agents - to necessarily pursue the good. Cf. Jason A. Heron, "McCabe and Aquinas in Love and Natural Law," in *New Blackfriars* 98, Nr. 1 (2017) 310.

⁴⁰ Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2003), 300-306.

a special word for *rational love*, that is, “dilection” (*dilectio*). Dilection, for Aquinas, refers to any intellectual love, including the love that God has. Aquinas holds that wherever a human, as a rational being, loves, that love has the form of dilection.⁴¹ This rational love takes us to unity with God, a unity that we can always experience in our present life. From a human point of view, Aquinas examines that the human soul’s formal object, our mind, and our will, is infinite in nature. It means that love – which is also infinite in nature – exists primarily in the domain of human intellect. But Aquinas clearly emphasizes that this infinite or divine nature of rational love is not taking away our freedom. It does not determine the action in a direct way, as we have seen in the discussions of passion and will. Our instinctive response to God’s love is always free; it is a coordinative tension between will and intellect. This is an important element that makes us not merely an “outlet” of God’s self-expression. Aquinas writes:

“[W]hen the Holy Ghost moves the human mind the movement of love *does not proceed from this motion in such a way that the human mind be merely moved*, without being the principle of this movement, as when a body is moved by some extrinsic motive power. For *this is contrary to the nature of a voluntary act*, whose principle needs to be in itself, *as stated above*: so that it would follow that to love is not a voluntary act, which involves a contradiction, *since love, of its very nature, implies an act of the will.*”⁴²

The choice to love rationally relates inseparably with the transcendental ability. This requires two acts. First, the intellect counsels. Second, the appetite accepts or rejects the counsels. When love *as will* that listens to the intellect counsels (which align themselves in the God’s law), love becomes the right action. That is why Aquinas seems to give the primacy to intellectual love as a love that overcomes passion and inclines itself to the Good. This inclination does not happen from human beings themselves. This inclination results from the grace, *first from the interiority* of human existence *as given* by God.

All these elements of rational will and its “mechanism” of knowledge and judgment serve at least three things in our conversation of love. First, it is vital to realize that Aquinas also views different kinds of

⁴¹ Gallagher, David M., “Thomas Aquinas on Self-Love as the Basis for Love of Others,” in *Acta Philosophica* 8, Nr. 1 (1999) 26.

⁴² Cf. Thomas Aquinas, “*Summa Theologiae*, IIa-IIae, q. 23. a. 2,” italics added, <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3023.html> (access 11.07.2020).

loves according to our inherent nature as the *animal rationale*. The distractive passionate love is a direct consequence of our emotive and conative powers as the creation with a soul. It is because of the different layers of the human soul, the ontological concept of love as ‘grace’ and as ‘Holy Spirit’ must be explained more existentially: as the judgmental process of the intellect, as the mastery of passions, and as the choice to act freely in our existing finite human nature. Second, Aquinas shows that the rational love in human life works in the “internal mechanism” of passion, will and intellect. This mechanism works not in a deterministic way since the will is always a result of choice to accept or to reject the intellect’s counsels. Therefore, the rational love, although present in the soul as the Holy Spirit himself, does not force someone to will and to act. The rational love that works in the intellect *only* creates the *transcendental faculty* in human beings that makes it possible for us *to think, to judge and to choose freely and accordingly*. I would like to return to Ibn Sina and see whether how the contingent beings utilize their inherent-intellectual love in the sensual parts of the soul. If we compare it with the Aquinas’ “internal mechanism” of intellectual judgment, would we be able to find the same indeterministic character of rational love in Ibn Sina concept of love?

Ibn Sina and the Deterministic Love

In Ibn Sina’s *Risālah fi al-’Ishq*, we can find a similar Aristotelian core conception of rational love used widely in Aquinas. For Ibn Sina, rational love is established upon the life of the rational soul. He also creates a distinction between the intellectual love and the other kind of love, which he calls “sensual love.” Sensual love is changeable, alterable, and unstable, while intellectual love is durable and unchanging. Intellectual love results from the in-depth perception of things and phenomena, whereas sensual love comes from a superficial perception of appearances. Therefore, sensual loves are limited and finite, whereas intellectual loves are unlimited and infinite.⁴³ This distinction helps us to locate intellectual love in the narrative of God’s self-love. Ibn Sina writes:

“If a man loves a beautiful form with animal desire, he deserves reproof, even condemnation and the charge of sin, as, for instance, those who commit unnatural adultery and in general people who go

⁴³ Hojjatolah Rafftari, “Happiness in View of Aristotle and Avicenna,” in *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity* 5, Nr. 8 (2015) 717.

astray. But whenever he loves a pleasing form *with an intellectual consideration*, in the manner we have explained, then *this is to be considered as an approximation to nobility and an increase in goodness*. For he covets something whereby *he will come nearer to the influence of that which is the First Source of influence and the Pure Object of love*, and more similar to the exalted and noble beings. And this will *dispose him to grace, generosity, and kindness*.”⁴⁴

Ibn Sina holds explicitly that the attribute of God’s self-love, God’s ‘*ishq*, is “pure essence and being.” This kind of love undoubtedly belongs to the divine essence, which goes downward to all other contingent beings through the emanative schema. Thus, now we can see the equation attribute of ‘*ishq* equals divine essence equals ontological manifestation. According to this equation, then our intellects are somehow consubstantial with God’s intellects through the process of emanation. Gutas further explains that it is “[O]ur cosmic duty is to enable our intellects to reach their full potential and behave like the celestial ones; human beings should possess divine souls just as do the angels.”⁴⁵ But it seems to me that there would be dangers in this cosmogony. I think Ibn Sina goes too far when he attempts to apply the Aristotelian principle of *harmonia* by matching the *given* intellectual love in human reality with the *giver*, the Pure Being. In short, Ibn Sina’s concept of rational love risks that the intelligible-contingent being might have been assimilated to the nature of God. This view would be inconsistent with the majority of both Islamic and Christian theological traditions that still consider the alterity of God from human realms as the consequence of the different nature between Creator and creation. Since Ibn Sina’s pantheistic view of the origin of love does not explain how it would work in the contingent realms, it opens a possible interpretation that love is deterministic.

Suppose we cannot differentiate the divine love from all different actions in the different layers of the human soul. In that case, all of those actions can be rationally justified as long as it serves rightly as the “medium” of unification and perfection toward the Pure Being. Since all kinds of love in the contingent being is rational and divine as they flow from the emanative Pure Being, it would also entail that there is – in a sense – no distinct, separable line between our human will and God’s

⁴⁴ Ibn Sina, *On Treatise of Love (Risālah fī al-‘ishq)*, trans. Emil L. Fackenheim, *Mediaeval Studies* 7, Nr. 1 (1945) 221. Italics added.

⁴⁵ Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2014), 379.

will. Therefore, in this schema, every act of love in Ibn Sina can be considered deterministic. It offers no element of choice, no ontological tensions between the incorruptible rational love and the perishable rational love. This view is incompatible with Aquinas' concept of love as the grace of God. Intellectual love in Ibn Sina is already determined by the internal capacity of the existing intelligible beings. Their level of perfection is already determined during the emanation process. For Aquinas, in contrast with Ibn Sina, the intellectual Divine love we possess still needs to work within this so-called 'created' natural law. The intellect's task, according to Aquinas, is to always submit the will in the inclination to the good in a non-intrusive, non-deterministic way through human's transcendental ability.

CONCLUSION

This ontological study finds that both Thomas Aquinas and Ibn Sina agree that human capacity to love comes from the Divine being (through the emanation of the Pure Being for Ibn Sina and through the grace of the Holy Spirit for Aquinas). For Ibn Sina, all contingent beings possess a natural desire and an innate love implanted by the Pure Being. This love acts as a "medium" that brings every contingent being to its origin and to return to the Pure Being. Ibn Sina also holds that there are various levels and kinds of love in simple inanimate beings as well as in the vegetative, animal, and rational soul. Although Aquinas rejects Ibn Sina's emanative theory, he also treats the relation of the creatures to God as one of a part to whole. Aquinas does so not in a pantheistic way such that all creatures would be parts of God. Instead, Aquinas employs this concept in his doctrine of participation to the grace, to the Holy Spirit that resides in the rational being's love.

I also find that Ibn Sina's principle of *harmonia* in his cosmogony, intriguingly, opens a possible interpretation for a deterministic character of love. Since it is possible to blur the distinction of the Divine and human nature in the essence and *actus* of love, there is no need to talk about human freedom or free will. All kinds of love in the contingent beings are already directed in the process of unification and perfection since the rational has only the divine nature. My reading on Ibn Sina's concept of love contrasts with Thomas Aquinas' in two aspects. First, Aquinas holds that the Divine essence of love is God Himself, in which we participate in the *actus* of love. By maintaining the complexity of the different layers

in human love, love is viewed as God's grace that is *super-added* to the natural power as the inclination. Love is formally united with the soul like the soul is the life of the body. Second, Aquinas argues that the *actus* of love results from the connatural knowledge of both the human's and of God's, which is heavily performed in reflective and critical reasoning capacity like. This distinction and the mechanism of ratio, in which the rational love occurs, maintain the concept of freedom and free will in human actions.

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