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A Comparative Analysis of Ibn Sina and Plato's Views on Love and its Relation with Beauty

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Abstract

Throughout the history of philosophy, many thinkers have reflected deeply on the nature of love, and some have achieved remarkable insights.

Plato, the renowned Greek philosopher, regarded the pursuit of the truth of love and its relation to beauty as a divine mission for philosophers. In his view, love is the desire for eternity, manifested in various levels of longing — from the lover's attraction to the beloved, to the appreciation of beauty that progresses from the tangible to the rational, and ultimately to absolute beauty, which is the very essence of truth.

In comparison, Ibn Sina, the Peripatetic philosopher, in his *Risala fi al-'Ishq (Treatise on Love)*, considered love a natural inclination of all beings toward what is good and beautiful. For him, love also exists in levels, the highest of which connects with the supreme level of being — God, the Almighty, who is the manifestation of goodness and beauty.

This paper compares the perspectives of these two great thinkers on love and its relationship with beauty. It demonstrates that sublime truths reveal themselves to sincere seekers in similar forms, where speech becomes so unified that implication and statement may replace one another.

Keywords: Plato, Ibn Sina, Symposium, Risala fi al-'Ishq, love, beauty, goodness

Introduction

It might theoretically be assumed that love and beauty have adorned the works of mystics, poets, artists, and men of letters more than they have appeared in the writings of theosophists and philosophers. However, a review of the history of thought reveals that, in addition to addressing fundamental issues in metaphysics, many philosophers have also deeply reflected on love and beauty and have sought to uncover their true nature.

Among the notable philosophers who studied these subjects are Plato, the great Greek philosopher, and Ibn Sīnā, the Peripatetic Muslim philosopher. The present study seeks to compare the views of these two prominent figures concerning love and beauty, and to identify the similarities between their perspectives. To achieve this, Plato's ideas are examined primarily through his *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, while Ibn Sīnā's view is explored through his *Risāla fī al-'Ishq* (*Treatise on Love*). The comparison reveals that when love and beauty are considered, the multiplicity of rational thoughts fades, and a unity grounded in truth-revealing insight emerges.

Love and Beauty in Plato's View

Plato is often referred to as the philosopher of love because his philosophy centres on the love of knowledge and the pursuit of what is good and noble. For him, beauty and goodness form the only path

leading to the boundless ocean of love and knowledge. Most of Plato's reflections on love and its relation to beauty appear in his *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, where he discusses different kinds of love and explores the connection between love and beauty. In the *Hippias Major*, although the main theme of the dialogue is beauty itself, Plato attempts to define beauty by adopting a negative approach. He presents three definitions of beauty—based on the notions of the proper, the beneficial, and the desirable—and, after examining their shortcomings, concludes that “the beautiful is difficult” (*Hippias Major* 601). In this dialogue, however, there is no discussion of love or its relation to beauty.

Symposium

At the house of Agathon, the Greek poet and tragedian, a banquet was held attended by several prominent Athenians, including Socrates. The participants decided to speak about *Eros* (the god of love), and each, according to his own understanding, delivered an eloquent speech in praise of *Eros*. When it was Socrates' turn, he, as was his habit, began by asking about the truth of love. In beautiful and fervent words, he sought to uncover the *whatness* of love.

Concerning *Eros*, Socrates quotes Diotima—the messenger of the gods—who teaches that *Eros* is neither a god nor a mortal, but a *daimōn*, a being intermediate between gods and humans. He is neither good nor bad, neither ugly nor beautiful, but something in between. By presenting Diotima's account of the nature of love, Socrates perhaps wishes to show that speaking truly of love is beyond human capacity and belongs only to the gods.

Regarding the lineage of love, Socrates explains that *Eros* was the child of Penia (the goddess of poverty) and Poros (the god of expediency), conceived on the birthday of Aphrodite (the goddess of beauty). Thus, *Eros* inherits poverty from his mother and expediency

from his father. Aware of what he lacks—beauty—he constantly seeks and strives for it.

Socrates concludes that this is why love is always a love for beauty. *Eros* compels human beings to turn toward beauty. Moreover, *Eros* is neither wise nor ignorant but stands between the two. Because he recognizes his ignorance, and because knowledge is among the most beautiful things, the beauty-loving *Eros* continually seeks knowledge. Therefore, *Eros* is a philosopher, existing between the knowledgeable and the ignorant, ever in pursuit of understanding.

As Werner Jaeger notes

“By assigning *Eros* a place midway between beauty and ugliness, wisdom and ignorance, divinity and humanity, wealth and poverty, Socrates contrives to connect him with philosophy. The gods do not philosophize or educate themselves—for they possess all wisdom. Fools and ignoramuses, on the other hand, do not aspire to knowledge—for the real evil of their ignorance is that, without knowing anything, they yet believe they know. Only the philosopher strives to achieve knowledge—for he knows that he does not possess it and feels his lack of it. He stands midway between wisdom and ignorance. Therefore, he alone is both capable of culture and sincerely concerned to obtain it. *Eros*, too, from his whole character, belongs to the same category. He is a true philosopher, standing midway between wisdom and folly, absorbed in constant striving and yearning. Agathon had depicted him as all that is lovely and beloved...” (Jaeger 1947, 188).

Socrates then concludes that love is a permanent desire to possess goodness (*Symposium* 205), and since the good is identical with the beautiful, love is ultimately the longing to possess beauty forever. As permanence and eternity are achieved through procreation and reproduction—and as the desire for generation is the divine aspect of

mortal beings—Socrates asserts that “love wants to possess the good forever” (*Symposium* 207).

For Socrates, every act of procreation—whether material or spiritual—occurs in beauty, while ugliness obstructs fertility. He also maintains that the offspring of the soul, such as knowledge and human excellence, are superior to bodily offspring; they are “the children of true poets and artists.” When Diotima distinguishes between those who procreate in body and those who procreate in soul, she includes poets and creative craftsmen among the latter, describing them as producers of wisdom (*phronēsis*) and virtue. According to this view, the goodness of poetry lies in its reference to ideal beauty, which is identified with moral goodness (Asmis 1991, 344–47).

After these discussions, Socrates seeks to disclose, through Diotima’s words, the highest and most sacred secret of love—the ascent toward beauty itself. He explains that the true follower of love first falls in love with a single beautiful body, but soon realizes that the beauty of one body is the same as the beauty in others. Thus, he ceases to love one body alone and learns to love all beautiful bodies. At this stage, his vision opens to the beauty of the soul (the self), which he recognizes as far superior to physical beauty. Consequently, he turns away from the bodily and seeks the beauty of the mind and of knowledge.

Reaching this stage, he perceives beauty in knowledge and the arts. Seeing beauty manifested in many forms, he no longer clings to a single manifestation but enters the endless ocean of beauty, giving birth to beautiful words and profound thoughts. Empowered by these, he attains a unique understanding of specific beauty.

According to Diotima, the one who has been so instructed in love and has learned to perceive beauty in proper order will, at the end, suddenly behold a nature of wondrous beauty—the final goal of all previous striving:

“First, it always is and neither comes to be nor passes away, neither waxes nor wanes. Second, it is not beautiful this way and ugly that way, nor beautiful at one time and ugly at another, nor beautiful in relation to one thing and ugly in relation to another; nor is it beautiful here but ugly there, as it would be if it were beautiful for some people and ugly for others. Nor will the beautiful appear to him in the guise of a face or hands or anything else that belongs to the body. It will not appear to him as one idea or one kind of knowledge. It is not anywhere in another thing, as in an animal, or in earth, or in heaven, or in anything else, but itself by itself with itself, it is always one in form; and all the other beautiful things share in that, in such a way that when those others come to be or pass away, this does not become the least bit smaller or greater nor suffer any change” (*Symposium* 211b).

Only when a person reaches this level and beholds true beauty does life attain its real value:

“...that communion only, beholding beauty with the eye of the mind, he will be enabled to bring forth, not images of beauty, but realities (for he has hold not of an image but of a reality), and bringing forth and nourishing true virtue to become the friend of God and be immortal, if mortal man may.” (*Symposium* 212a).

From Socrates' words, it may be understood that, since beauty manifests at various levels—from the tangible and worldly to the absolute—love, which seeks beauty and desires to partake of it, must also ascend through corresponding stages: from the abject and low to the sublime and perfect. Because beauty is wholly good, the seeker of beauty is likewise a seeker of goodness; and thus *Eros*, or love itself, is always striving toward perfection and happiness.

Phaedrus

The main subject of the *Phaedrus* is love. In this dialogue, Plato contrasts earthly love with true love. After pointing out the weaknesses and shortcomings of earthly love, he reveals the grandeur and glory of true and noble love. Essentially, Plato does not regard earthly love as worthy of the name “love,” but rather as mere pleasure-seeking.

For Plato, true love is a form of divine madness (*mania*) and passion inspired by Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty, and *Eros*, the god of love. He classifies divine madness—understood as inspiration from the gods—into four types, each associated with a particular deity: prophetic inspiration, related to Apollo; initiatory or ritual inspiration, connected with Dionysus; poetic inspiration, belonging to the Muses; and the madness of love, inspired by Aphrodite and *Eros*, which he considers the highest and noblest of all forms of divine madness (*Phaedrus* 265).

Plato writes that the one who, upon seeing earthly beauty, is transported by the memory of true beauty longs to soar upward but cannot. Such a person is like a bird fluttering its wings, gazing upward and neglecting the world below; therefore, he is thought to be mad. Yet, of all divine inspirations, this is the most exalted and the offspring of the highest power. “He who loves the beautiful,” says Socrates, “is called a lover because he partakes of it” (*Phaedrus* 253).

As in the *Symposium*, Plato in the *Phaedrus* presents love as a peacemaker between gods and men. He argues that since justice, temperance, and knowledge are not perceptible to the senses, only beauty can be seen and apprehended in this way. When human souls once accompanied the gods, they beheld beauty in all its splendour; now, through their brightest and most powerful sense—sight—they can still perceive reflections of that beauty on earth. The same faculty, however, cannot perceive knowledge or virtue. If our eyes could behold the image of knowledge as vividly as they perceive beauty, that vision would enthrall us beyond endurance. Of all the

eternal realities, only beauty has the attribute of being visible to humankind, and thus it captivates humankind more profoundly than any other truth (*Phaedrus* 250).

However, according to Plato, a soul that has succumbed to corruption will, upon encountering earthly beauty, fail to rise toward the true and eternal beauty. Instead, it will become trapped in worldly desires and, like animals, will concern itself only with bodily needs. Those souls, however, that have preserved their purity will, upon seeing earthly beauty, recall the true beauty once beheld in the divine realm.

Therefore, true love is that which aspires toward the good and the beautiful. Only the soul of one who loves truth—that is, the philosopher—grows wings to ascend toward love and beauty. The philosopher continually advances in the realm of perfection, engaging with divine matters and moving toward true existence and true knowledge—“the colourless, formless, intangible essence, visible only to mind ... and beholding the other true existences in like manner, and feasting upon them” (*Phaedrus* 247).

Thus, in the *Phaedrus*, as in other dialogues, Plato—through Socrates—teaches that it is best for one to devote life to the pursuit of love and beauty.

It should also be noted that *Phaedrus* discusses other important themes, such as the conditions necessary for the attainment of true eloquence: mastery of the art of language depends on the acquisition of genuine philosophy, which itself requires noble love and thought. Moreover, Plato remarks that the “feeling of dignity” is the greatest gift of divine love bestowed upon humankind.

Beauty and Love in Ibn Sīnā's View

Shaykh al-Ra'īs Abū 'Alī Sīnā (Avicenna) was one of the most prominent figures in the history of world philosophy and science. He

integrated the Peripatetic philosophy of Socrates with Neoplatonic thought and, based on Islamic principles and his own remarkable intellect, presented it in a unique and distinguished manner. His synthesis earned the admiration of seekers of knowledge and wisdom, and its influence became enduring across the intellectual world.

Although Ibn Sīnā's philosophy represents the pinnacle of rational and metaphysical thought, some of his writings clearly demonstrate that he was not indifferent to non-philosophical concerns. He also paid careful attention to the mystical and romantic dimensions of human existence, and even within his rational framework, these aspects play an influential role in his analyses.

In the eighth *Namat* (section) of his *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, Ibn Sīnā discusses the concept of love, while in the ninth and tenth *Namats*, entitled "Stations of the Mystics," he expresses his views on mysticism and the mystical path. However, his most detailed reflections on love appear in his *Risāla fī al-'Ishq* (*Treatise on Love*).

Eighth *Namat* of *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*

In the concluding parts of the eighth *Namat*, Ibn Sīnā discusses the distinction between unreal and real loves, as well as the various levels of love. He writes that "True love (*'ishq ḥaqīqī*) is the delight arising from the apprehension of the presence of some essence." and "*desire (shawq)* is the movement toward completing that delight" (Ibn Sīnā, 1386, p. 434-435).

Accordingly, love (*'ishq*) and desire (*shawq*) are two different realities, and the lover (*'āshiq*) differs from the one who merely desires. The term *lover* has a broader meaning, while the *desirous* is a more specific designation. Thus, every desirous person is a lover, but not every lover is desirous (cf. Ibn Sīnā, 1386, p. 437).

In the eighteenth chapter, Ibn Sīnā outlines the hierarchy of intellectual substances in relation to happiness and love. At the highest level is the Divine Essence: “The First [Being] is a lover of His own Essence and beloved of His own Essence — whether or not He is loved by others” (Ibn Sīnā, 1386, p. 435). Establishing true love for the Almighty Necessary clears Him of any notion of desire, since, as Ibn Sīnā asserts, there is no perfection absent in the Divine Essence for which He could long. Therefore, the happiness of God is the most perfect happiness.

Following the love of the Almighty Necessary—regarding perfection—“After Him come those who rejoice in Him, and in their own essences insofar as they rejoice in Him — and these are the sacred intellectual substances (*al-jawāhir al-aqliyyah al-qudsiyyah*.” (Ibn Sīnā, 1386, p. 435). The next level comprises the “desirous lovers,” (*al-'ushshāq al-mushtāqīn*) “Insofar as they are lovers, they have attained a kind of union, and thus they are delighted; but insofar as they are desirous, there remains for some among them a kind of pain. Yet since that pain issues from Him [the Beloved], it is a delightful pain.” (Ibn Sīnā, 1386, p. 435). According to Ibn Sīnā, the highest states of the human soul in this world belong to those who are desirous lovers. They will not be freed from desire in this life, but only in the hereafter.

Below them are other human souls that occupy intermediate positions between the two extremes—the divine life of the next world and the mean life of this world—each at its own level. At the lowest rank are the souls immersed in the material and evil aspects of nature, who can never free themselves from the bonds of this world to attain liberation.

In the nineteenth chapter, Ibn Sīnā demonstrates that natural and voluntary love and freedom also apply to other souls and bodily powers. He writes:

“Whenever you contemplate things attentively, you will find that every corporeal entity possesses a perfection specific to itself.

Within it, you will also find a love—whether voluntary or natural—directed toward that perfection. And when it is distant from that perfection, it has a natural or voluntary yearning toward it. This is a mercy (*raḥmah*) deriving from the First Providence (*al-‘ināyah al-ūlā*), according to the mode in which that providence pertains to it.” (Ibn Sīnā, 1386, p. 437).

A Treatise on Love

This treatise consists of seven chapters in which Ibn Sīnā illustrates the presence and flow of love in all beings of the world, thereby revealing the essence of love.

In the first chapter, titled “On the diffusion of the power of love throughout all beings,” Ibn Sīnā first considers existence as the source of all goodness and perfection, while quiddity (*māhiyya*) is viewed as the source of evil and deficiency. He writes:

“Thus, every contingent being, by virtue of the aspect of existence that it possesses, is ever desirous of perfection and yearning for goodness. And according to its innate nature and essence, it is averse to and fleeing from evils and deficiencies, which are consequent upon the aspect of quiddity (*māhiyyah*) and matter (*hayūlā*).

This intrinsic yearning and inborn, natural inclination — which is the cause of the preservation of their existence — is what we call *love (‘ishq)*” (Ibn Sīnā, 1388, p. 407).

He then classifies all beings into three categories. The first is the being that dominates all others by virtue of its essential perfection and possesses every good and blessing. The second is the being that lies at the extreme of deficiency, poverty, and evil, whose attribution of existence is almost unreal. The third is the being situated between these two extremes—neither at the height of perfection nor at the depth of imperfection. This intermediate being, in its existence,

constantly desires perfection and goodness while fleeing from the imperfections inherent in quiddity and substance.

According to Ibn Sīnā, divine wisdom has ordained that all creatures are endowed with this innate love and natural desire, enabling them to progress from imperfection toward perfection. Such love, he explains, is essential to the nature of all beings, and the ultimate Beloved is God, the Supreme Being who governs all creation.

Because God, by His essence, is pure goodness and existence—and because the object of all souls' desire is goodness—it follows that goodness itself loves goodness. Ibn Sīnā writes:

“For if goodness (*khayriyyah*) were not, in itself, something lovable, it would not become the object of aspiration for exalted souls. Hence, the greater the degree of goodness, the greater its worthiness of being loved. That Being who is free from all imperfections and purified from all defects—just as He is at the utmost limit of goodness—must likewise be at the utmost limit of being beloved and of loving.

Here, then, love, the lover, and the beloved are one and the same; there is no duality between them. The existence of that sacred Being is at every moment cognizant of His own Essence and directed toward His own essential perfection; therefore, His love must be the highest and most perfect of all loves.” (Ibn Sīnā, 1388, p. 407-408).

In the second chapter, Ibn Sīnā discusses simple, lifeless beings and explains the flow of love within them. He identifies the cause of the sustenance of these beings as the presence of natural and innate love. The innate love of matter lies in its inclination toward form, and the innate love of accidents lies in their attachment to a subject—since, without a subject, accidents cannot exist (Ibn Sīnā, 1388, p. 409).

In the third chapter, Ibn Sīnā addresses the existence of love in the souls and forms of plants. He maintains that love in the nutritive faculty produces the desire for nourishment; in the growth faculty, it

gives rise to the desire for expansion in length, width, and depth; and in the reproductive faculty, it inspires the desire to produce another being like itself (Ibn Sīnā, 1388, p. 410).

In the fourth chapter, which concerns love in animal souls, Ibn Sīnā explains that without love, the existence of various faculties in animals would be meaningless, and creatures would remain idle. Observation shows, however, that animals exhibit a natural aversion toward things contrary to their nature and a desire for what accords with it. The origin of these inclinations, Ibn Sīnā asserts, is their natural love and innate intuition.

Here, he distinguishes between two kinds of love. The first is natural love, the bearer of which cannot rest until reaching its final goal—like a stone that tends naturally to fall toward its destination, or the vegetative faculties that seek nourishment and absorb it into the body unless obstructed. The second is voluntary (discretionary) love, whose bearer refrains from its object when perceiving possible harm—such as an animal that avoids eating food when it senses danger from a predator. At times, a single beloved may have two lovers: one natural and one voluntary. For example, reproduction involves two types of love—the reproductive vegetative faculty, which is natural, and the animal sensual faculty, which is voluntary. According to Ibn Sīnā, love is non-discretionary (natural) in plants but discretionary in non-rational animals (Ibn Sīnā, 1388, pp. 414–415).

The fifth chapter addresses the love of the graceful and those endowed with sound intuition in relation to the emanations of beauty. Ibn Sīnā begins by presenting several preliminary points to clarify the subject.

First, he demonstrates that the animal and imaginative faculties in human beings depend on the rational faculty for their activity. He then explains that all of humanity's various faculties operate under the influence of the rational soul. Following this, he notes that God has implanted a blessing within the nature of all beings. Since these

blessings are relative and additional rather than absolute, it is possible that what appears good within its own limits may be harmful when compared with a higher form of good. For instance, actions specific to the animal soul are considered blessings in their proper context, yet when compared with the rational soul—superior in value and rank—they are counted among evils (Ibn Sīnā, 1388, p. 417).

After these preliminaries, Ibn Sīnā discusses the fruits of nearness to God and the consequences of remoteness from Him for the rational soul:

“The rational human souls, by virtue of their aspect of spiritual immateriality and intrinsic subtlety, are ever desirous of those things that are unique in beauty and excellence, and unmatched in comeliness of form. Likewise, they incline toward harmonious melodies and pleasant, varied sounds, and toward all that is akin to these...” (Ibn Sīnā, 1388, p. 417).

According to Ibn Sīnā, when these souls become capable of conceiving intelligibles and perceiving universals, they come to realize that the closer they draw to the True Beloved, the more they increase in goodness, harmony, stability, and order. Conversely, distance from the Truth—the source of all blessings and the origin of every perfection—leads to dispersion and multiplicity, while nearness to Him leads to unity.

Ibn Sīnā then differentiates between two kinds of love: pure love, which originates from the rational and incorporeal aspect of the human being and serves as a means of union with the True Beloved and the Guiding Cause; and impure love, which arises from following animal desires. The latter, he warns, is blameworthy and deserves painful punishment in the hereafter. Thus, love of a beautiful face or pleasing form—if motivated by sensual pleasure—is harmful to the rational faculty and generally reprehensible. Yet, if such love is directed toward God and inspired by divine beauty, it is good and praiseworthy for human beings (Ibn Sīnā, 1388, p. 418).

Ibn Sīnā then turns to the relationship between outer beauty and moral character. He regards beauty of face and manner as divine manifestations, bestowed by nature and indicative of the goodness of temperament. In his view, physical beauty usually suggests goodness of character—unless it is corrupted by external causes or the company of the wicked. Likewise, a person who lacks physical beauty may nonetheless attain moral beauty through association with virtuous individuals (Ibn Sīnā, 1388, p. 419).

The sixth chapter concerns the love of godly souls and explains that the Primary Cause and Absolute Goodness is the Beloved of all divine souls.

Regarding the love of godly souls for God, Ibn Sīnā asserts that since the Primary Cause is Absolute Goodness, all contingent beings love Him and desire Him for their sustenance. Accordingly, godly souls—whether human or angelic—love and long for Him, and the Absolute Goodness is the Beloved of these souls. Because of their relation to Him and their assimilation to His essence through love, these souls are called *godly souls*. The love that characterizes souls associated with godliness is constant and unremitting (Ibn Sīnā, 1388, pp. 421–423). Thus, the existence of the Truth—who is pure goodness—is the True Beloved of both human and angelic souls.

In the seventh and final chapter, Ibn Sīnā argues that all beings in the world love the Absolute Goodness:

“All beings in the universe are lovers and desirers of the Absolute Good through an innate love. And the Absolute Good manifests Itself to Its lovers; however, these manifestations differ according to the degrees of beings. For the nearer they are to the Absolute Good, the more abundant are their manifestations; and the farther they are from proximity to the Truth, the fewer and weaker are their manifestation. (This is that very *union* which the Sufis speak of in their expressions.)” (Ibn Sīnā, 1388, pp. 424–426).

According to Ibn Sīnā, this universal love arises from the innate desire of creatures to attain perfection. Perfection itself is a form of blessing, and the source of all blessing is the True Beloved of all beings—the Primary Cause—who, by His essence, manifests Himself to all creation. If He were veiled in His essence and refrained from self-manifestation, He would remain unknown, and no being would receive the grace of His existence. The absence of manifestation to some entities results from their own incapacity and limitation, not from any deficiency in the divine agent, for the Essence of the Almighty Truth is absolute manifestation (Ibn Sīnā, 1388, p. 427).

Ibn Sīnā further explains that every being in the cosmos partakes of divine manifestation in accordance with its capacity. The first among these is the Active Intellect, which receives divine manifestations directly, without mediation. The second are the godly souls, which, having been actualized by the Active Intellect, have attained nearness to God. The third class includes animal and vegetative faculties, which receive divine effusion according to their potential, through essential love and natural desire for assimilation to the Supreme. These are followed by the human souls, which perform rational actions and virtuous deeds to acquire qualities such as justice and intellect, thereby seeking assimilation to divine attributes. Finally, the angelic souls engage in movements of love and yearning to assimilate to their superiors (Ibn Sīnā, 1388, pp. 428–429).

Nevertheless, Ibn Sīnā emphasizes that all these souls assimilate to the Absolute Goodness only in their *goals*, which represent their perfections, and not in their *origins*, which remain potential and contingent. The Absolute Goodness, being free from all potentiality, transcends association with any form of possibility (Ibn Sīnā, 1388, pp. 428–429).

Ibn Sīnā regards the angelic souls as lovers of the beauty of the Truth, perpetually turning toward Him. Thus, divine manifestation and

Absolute Goodness are both the cause of the creation of beings and the source of their continued existence (Ibn Sīnā, 1388, p. 429).

Furthermore, the Almighty Truth is the True Beloved, and whoever loves the Almighty is in turn loved by Him. Ibn Sīnā writes:

“Thus, the Absolute Good loves, by virtue of His own essential wisdom, those who attain to His perfections — even though they may not reach the ultimate goal nor the boundless degrees thereof. For it is impossible to grasp and encompass all the perfections of the Exalted Truth, since just as His existence is infinite, so too are His perfections and attributes infinite.

How could that which is finite ever reach the purely Infinite?

It is precisely for this reason that imitation of mortal kings provokes their displeasure and arouses their wrath — because the perfections and attributes they possess are limited. Yet resemblance to the Creator, the Exalted, brings about His satisfaction and becomes the cause of an increase in His love and affection.” (Ibn Sīnā, 1388, p. 430).

Through this reasoning, Ibn Sīnā establishes the *sovereignty of love* throughout the cosmos and links it inseparably with goodness—which is identical to beauty.

Conclusion

In light of the discussions on love and beauty in the philosophies of Plato and Ibn Sīnā, it is evident that, despite differences in their principles and conclusions, several shared aspects can be identified—made possible, as it were, by the “kingdom of love.” These commonalities include the following:

1. Love is always directed toward beauty and goodness.

The radiation and brightness of love arise only in the light of beauty, which animates the world and all beings within it. For Plato, the highest manifestation of beauty is goodness, which shines through the beauties of the world and inspires love. For Ibn Sīnā, the goodness and beauty of the Truth—who is the Absolute Goodness—are reflected in worldly beauties and thus kindle love. In both traditions, beauty and goodness are intimately bound, even identical; therefore, love always moves toward goodness. In Plato's thought, the lover ascends from appreciation of tangible and worldly beauty to rational and absolute beauty, where the intuition of beauty itself becomes possible. Likewise, Ibn Sīnā holds that beauty inspires the soul's love for perfection, emanating from God, who is the very Essence of beauty and the Eternal Beloved. Significantly, in both systems, beauty—the source of love's movement toward perfection—is a manifestation of absolute beauty, which is itself goodness and truth. Thus, the unity of beauty, goodness, and truth is realized.

2. Love and beauty exist in different degrees—from love of worldly beauty to love of true and absolute beauty.

Tangible and material beauty, which is the object of imperfect or illusory love, can serve as the foundation for attaining the truth of beauty, the goal of genuine love. In Plato's philosophy, this true beauty is exemplified by goodness and represented by Agathon. In Ibn Sīnā's view, it is God, the Almighty—the Eternal Beloved and Beauty Absolute—who surpasses all that can be conceived by the imagination. From Him, love and beauty, like existence itself, flow throughout all creation.

3. The lover is characterized by need, and the Beloved by perfection.

Both thinkers portray the lover as essentially poor and in need, while the Beloved—Beauty Absolute—is perfect and self-sufficient. In Plato's view, love is deprived of beauty and therefore seeks it,

striving toward the Absolute Beauty, which is identical with the Absolute Good. For Ibn Sīnā, all creation is moved by the power of love toward beauty and toward God, who is the Good and the Absolute Truth.

4. Love is inseparable from knowledge.

For Plato, *Eros* is the philosopher, and beauty is linked with knowledge; therefore, love and knowledge are bound together. Similarly, Ibn Sīnā holds that understanding the degrees of perfection and beauty of God engenders love for Him. All beings, he argues, receive divine manifestations according to their intellectual capacity and competence—thus, love and knowledge advance together. Knowledge illuminates the path of love, revealing its true and radiant form, while love elevates knowledge, giving it depth and vitality.

As for the ultimate reality of love, we may recall the words of Ibn ‘Arabī: love is like existence—its meaning is most familiar, yet its reality remains most hidden. Perhaps, then, it may finally be said that love, like existence, is a secret.

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