

## A Critical Examination of the Concept of Love in Mulla Sadra's Thought (Emphasizing Its Types, Degrees, and Correlates)

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### Introduction

Love, as one of the most fundamental and enigmatic concepts in human thought, has always attracted the attention of philosophers, mystics, and religious traditions. Among Islamic philosophical schools, Mullā Ṣadrā's Transcendent Philosophy (al-Ḥikma al-Muta'āliyya), grounded in principles such as the primacy of existence, the gradation of being, and substantial motion, offers a novel and systematic account of love. From Ṣadrā's perspective, love is not an accidental phenomenon limited to human relationships; rather, it is a pervasive and dynamic reality present throughout all levels of being, playing a fundamental role in orienting the cosmos toward absolute perfection. Within this framework, love is understood as a metaphysical and cosmological principle that orders the overall structure of existence.

Mullā Ṣadrā's theory of love rests on several fundamental premises. First is the concomitance of love with existence, life, and knowledge. In his view, attributing love to a being devoid of life and consciousness amounts to a merely verbal attribution. Since existence is concomitant with life and knowledge, love is likewise realized in all levels of being. In this regard, Mullā Ṣadrā sharply criticizes Avicenna's position, which affirms universal love without accepting universal life and consciousness in beings. The second premise is the gradation of existence: existence is a single reality possessing varying degrees of intensity and weakness, and since love is among the perfections of existence, it too admits of gradational degrees—from the highest level in the essence of the Necessary Existent to the lowest levels of nature. The third premise is the interpretation of the causal order as a chain of lover and beloved: every effect loves its cause, for it derives its existence and perfection from it, and this love is both the source of its coming into being and the ground of its persistence.

### Research Findings

In Mullā Ṣadrā's thought, love is an existential reality that is meaningless without life, knowledge, and will. Like other perfections, love—by virtue of the simplicity of existence—pervades all levels of being in a gradational manner.

Love is present in all beings in proportion to their existential rank; however, yearning is meaningful only in beings that possess a potential and privative aspect.

Accordingly, the Necessary Existent and immaterial intellects possess love alone, not yearning.

True and essential love is confined to the Necessary Existent, while the love attributed to other beings is accidental, derivative, and arises from the divine manifestation and existential effusion. The causal chain is, in reality, the very chain of lover and beloved.

Mullā Ṣadrā, drawing on principles such as the unity of the reality of existence, the homogeneity of cause and effect, and the goodness and delightfulness of existence, presents several arguments to establish love in all levels of being.

Love is denied in prime matter and accidents due to the absence of existential actuality, life, and consciousness, although this position is subject to both foundational and structural critiques.

Tensions between the universalization of true love and the notion of metaphorical love, the incompatibility of the theory of love with the doctrine of the relational existence of effects, and ambiguity concerning the bidirectional concomitance of love and consciousness constitute some of the most significant critiques directed at Mullā Ṣadrā's theory of love.

### **Conclusion**

Mulla Sadra associates love, which is inseparable from existence, knowledge, and power, with the actual aspect of perfections, while he regards yearning as pertaining to their potential aspect. In other words, in the levels of existence, love arises from the immediate and intuitive perception of actual perfections, whereas yearning emerges from the absence or incompleteness of perfections. Accordingly, in beings that are purely actual, with no potential deficiency—such as the Necessary Existent and intellectual abstractions—only love is realized, and yearning has no meaning. Conversely, beings possessing both actual and potential aspects experience both love and yearning proportionate to their ontological rank, with the intensity of each depending on the extent of actualized and lacking perfections.

Since all existential perfections at every level of being emanate from the Divine Essence, all loves ultimately return to God. Thus, the only being possessing intrinsic love is God, while love in other levels of existence is accidental and derived. Consequently, divine love is interpreted as the essential and primary love, whereas love toward the macrocosm and microcosm is derivative and accidental. Yearning, likewise, always relates to higher perfections; hence, no being desires what is intrinsic to itself or inferior to its rank. In summary, beings love the actual perfections granted by God and yearn for potential perfections they are capable of receiving. Nonetheless, Mulla Sadra's view faces certain foundational and structural critiques, many of which stem from the definition of love itself.

**Keywords:** Mullā Ṣadrā, Love, Existence, Levels, Concomitances.