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From Emotion to Ontology: The Concept of Love in Davvānī's *Akhlāq-i Jalālī*

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Abstract

This article examines the concept of love (*maḥabba*) in Jalāl al-Dīn al-Davvānī's *Akhlāq-i Jalālī* and investigates how love functions as an organising principle within his ethical system. Drawing on a close textual analysis of Davvānī's treatment of love, the study reconstructs the ontological, ethical, and socio-political dimensions of the concept. It situates it within the broader tradition of Islamic moral philosophy. It argues that love is not merely an emotion in Davvānī's thought but a fundamental principle. This force holds the cosmos together, underlies the structure of reality, guides moral development, and sustains social and political order. The analysis traces love from its metaphysical foundation in *ḥubb-i dhātī* (essential love), understood as the dynamic basis of emanation (*ṣudūr*) and return, through its various ethical manifestations and hierarchical degrees. Attention is given to the relationship between love, knowledge (*maʿrifa*), justice, and the purification of the soul, as well as to the roles of prophetic guidance, family relations, political authority, and friendship as expressions of love within human society. The study demonstrates that Davvānī integrates the metaphysical, ethical, and social dimensions of love into a coherent theoretical framework, a bond, in his account, as much as a principle, in which the perfection of the individual and the harmony of society are grounded in a common ontological source. By reconstructing this framework, the article contributes to a deeper understanding of love in Islamic ethical thought and clarifies Davvānī's distinctive place within the post-classical Akhlāq tradition.

Keywords: Islamic philosophy; ethics; Jalāl al-Dīn al-Davvānī; love

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1. Introduction

The concept of *akhlāq* is one of the foundational categories of Islamic ethical thought, referring broadly to virtues and vices, as well as to the praiseworthy and blameworthy dispositions that shape human character. Positive traits and noble conduct are commonly described through expressions such as *ḥusn al-khuluq* (good character), *maḥāsin al-akhlāq* (moral excellences), *makārim al-akhlāq* (noble virtues), *al-akhlāq al-ḥasana* (good morals), and *al-akhlāq al-ḥamīda* (praiseworthy character). Conversely, negative dispositions and reprehensible actions are articulated through terms such as *sūʾal-khuluq* (bad character), *al-akhlāq al-dhamīma* (blameworthy morals), and *al-akhlāq al-sayyiʾa* (evil conduct) (Çağrıcı 1989, pp. 1–9).

Over time, however, theoretical reflections on ethics came to be shaped primarily within the intellectual frameworks of kalām (Islamic theology), taṣawwuf (Sufism), and falsafa (Islamic philosophy). Questions concerning human nature and moral disposition, the meaning of happiness and human flourishing, and the cultivation of ethical virtue emerged as central concerns within each of these disciplines. As Islamic thought entered a period of institutional consolidation, both internal and external political developments profoundly influenced its intellectual trajectory. Alongside struggles for political authority and sectarian conflicts within the Muslim world, the Mongol invasions, which cast their shadow over vast regions of the Islamic lands, were among the most significant forces shaping the intellectual climate of the age. The atmosphere of despair generated by war, violence, and widespread loss of life heightened society's longing for values such as love, compassion, and solidarity. Increasingly, scholars and intellectuals came to regard love as a foundational principle for restoring social harmony and political order. This transformation was accompanied by a corresponding shift in religious thought: conceptions of God that emphasised divine power and punishment gradually gave way to understandings centred on divine mercy, compassion, and benevolence. Against this backdrop, philosophical, theological, and mystical circles developed a growing interest in ethical visions grounded in love, seeking to place affection, mercy, and human fellowship at the heart of the moral life (Çilingir 2018, pp. 73–96).

In Islamic ethical thought, love (*maḥabba*) has been treated as a fundamental concept closely related to the ontological constitution of the human being, ethical perfection, and social order. In classical ethical literature, in particular, love is conceived not merely as an individual emotion or psychological inclination, but as an ontological principle and a virtue that enables the human being's movement toward perfection. Within this tradition, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Davvānī (d. 908/1502), in his work *Akhlāq-i Jalālī* (Wickens 1984), systematically examines the concept of love in its metaphysical, ethical, and social dimensions, thereby establishing a distinctive position within the Islamic ethical heritage. For Davvānī, love is a principle of orientation lying at the foundation of the order of being, and it plays a determinative role both in the individual's process of perfection and in the constitution of social life.

The status of love within Islamic ethical philosophy has long remained a subject of conceptual tension. Thinkers of the *Akhlāq* tradition inherited from both Greek philosophy and the Islamic intellectual heritage two seemingly distinct understandings of love: on the one hand, love as a universal force of attraction permeating the cosmos, derived from the Empedoclean and Neoplatonic traditions transmitted into Arabic philosophy; on the other, love as a voluntary and cultivable virtue, subject to ethical evaluation and discipline alongside virtues such as courage, temperance, and justice. The challenge of reconciling these cosmological and ethical dimensions of love constitutes a central problem within the tradition, and different philosophers responded to it in markedly different ways. Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, for example, largely retains the virtue-ethical framework inherited from Ibn Miskawayh, treating love primarily as a hierarchy of voluntary attachments directed toward the good, thereby relegating its cosmological significance to a secondary role. Davvānī, by contrast, advances a more ambitious synthesis. Rather than treating cosmology as a backdrop to ethics, he establishes it as the very foundation of ethical life. The entire hierarchy of human loves, ranging from divine love to social and political bonds, is grounded in a single ontological principle: *ḥubb-i dhātī*, the self-directed love through which being itself proceeds and returns. Consequently, Davvānī does not merely expand the *Akhlāq* tradition's taxonomy of love; he fundamentally reconfigures the relationship between metaphysics and ethics, presenting love as the principle that simultaneously orders the cosmos, perfects the individual soul, and sustains human society.

Davvānī's conception of love is striking for the relationship he establishes between ontological hierarchy and ethical degrees. For him, the ultimate source of love is God, the absolute good and perfection. Hence, the highest degree of love is divine love, grounded in *maʿrifa*. Below this lie types of love that rest on different ontological and functional bases: a cause of existence, a source of benefit, a means of establishing social order, and a basis for fellowship. Parental love, love for one's teacher, the love between ruler and subjects, and friendship are all examples of these gradations of love. Each form of love must be exercised in a manner appropriate to its position; this is necessary both for the continuity of individual virtue and for the maintenance of social order.

Davvānī does not confine love solely to its ethical and social aspects. He grounds it as a metaphysical principle of motion operating throughout all levels of existence. The cyclical structure of the order of being, emanating from its divine source (*ṣudūr*) and returning to its origin, is interpreted as the manifestation of divine love, which the people of truth designate as *ḥubb-i dhātī*. Within this framework, the human being, who bridges the levels of existence through intellect (*ʿaql*) and soul (*nafs*), rises to the position of love's most conscious subject. As the soul is purified by its corporeal attachments, love itself is purified and finally oriented toward the experience of unity. Thus, in Davvānī's thought, love ceases to be a mere psychological inclination and becomes an ontological and epistemological process leading the human being toward metaphysical truth.

Davvānī also assigns particular importance to the social dimension of love. Because human nature inclines toward fellowship (*uns*) and communal life, love is, for him, a necessary condition for the formation of society and the founding of civilisation; congregational worship and political authority both function, in his account, to reinforce this bond, a claim examined in detail in Sections 6 and 7. Love thus emerges as the foundational principle of individual perfection, social order, and political stability alike.

This article examines Jalāl al-Dīn al-Davvānī's conception of love by exploring its ontological foundations, ethical gradations, and social implications. It first elucidates the metaphysical significance that Davvānī attributes to love, then analyses its various degrees and relational forms, and finally evaluates its role in cultivating individual virtue and maintaining social order. In doing so, the study demonstrates that Davvānī's theory of love constitutes a systematic and integrated framework that contributes significantly to a holistic understanding of love within the Islamic ethical tradition. Although the virtue of love has been widely discussed across diverse branches of Islamic thought, including philosophy, Sufism (*taṣawwuf*), and theology (*kalām*), thereby generating a rich and multifaceted body of literature, the present study confines its analysis to Islamic moral philosophy. Since a comprehensive treatment of the perspectives developed within *taṣawwuf* and *kalām* would exceed the limits of a single article, the discussion focuses primarily on Davvānī's account of love, while incorporating selective comparisons with other thinkers where these illuminate the distinctive features of his position. More specifically, the study asks: How does love function as an organising principle within Davvānī's ethical system? This question serves as the central focus of the inquiry. Accordingly, comparative engagement with earlier representatives of the *Akhlāq* tradition, particularly Fārābī, Ibn Miskawayh, and Ṭūsī, is employed not as an end but as a means of reconstructing and clarifying Davvānī's conception of love. By situating his thought within this intellectual lineage, the article seeks to identify both the continuities that connect Davvānī to his predecessors and the distinctive features that characterise his contribution to Islamic ethical philosophy.

2. Literature Review

Although the concept of love (*maḥabba*) has long been a recurrent theme in Islamic ethical and philosophical scholarship, the secondary literature is heavily concentrated

on a small number of canonical figures, and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Davvānī has so far received comparatively little sustained attention as a theorist of love in his own right. The most substantial body of scholarship centres on Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī*. Aygün Akyol has examined the intricate relationship between ethics and politics in this work through the lens of the virtue of love (Ṭūsī 2013, p. 247; Akyol 2017, pp. 295–320). Lokman Çilingir has traced a continuous "politics of love" extending from Plato to Ṭūsī (Çilingir 2018, pp. 73–96). Zahra Ayubi, in her *Gendered Morality: Classical Islamic Ethics of the Self, Family, and Society*, has offered a critical analysis of the ethical thought of Davvānī, Ghazālī, and Ṭūsī. Finally, Hümeyra Hacer Ocakzade has explored love as a foundational principle of state ethics in both Ṭūsī and Kınalızâde (Ocakzade 2019, pp. 31–48). These studies establish that within the Akhlāq tradition, love is understood as an ethical, political, and social principle rather than a purely affective state. This positions the article alongside recent Anglophone scholarship that treats love in Islamic philosophy as an ontological category, notably Chittick's (2024) *Love in Islamic Philosophy* and Zargar's (2017) *The Polished Mirror*, neither of which has yet been brought into direct conversation with Davvānī. A parallel line of scholarship addresses the same concept in earlier figures: Mahmut Avcı has examined the virtue of love in Ibn Miskawayh's *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq* (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 226; Miskawayh 2013, p. 155; Avcı 2018, pp. 3021–33) and Ahmet Çapku has analysed love in al-Ghazālī's thought (Ghazālī 1998, pp. 360–61; Çapku 2011, pp. 135–52). For al-Ghazālī, maḥabba is grounded in the soul's natural attraction to what benefits or resembles it, and its highest form, love of God, is reached through knowledge (maʿrifa) of His attributes rather than through the ontology of emanation on which Davvānī builds his account. Where al-Ghazālī treats love primarily as a station (maqām) on the mystical path, disciplined through self-purification, Davvānī reframes it as a metaphysical principle operative at every level of being, human and non-human alike, and only secondarily as a station to be attained. This difference in starting point, station versus principle, is what the present study takes up in detail in Section 4. Studies on the broader Islamic discussion of *maḥabba* by İlhan Kutluer, Süleyman Uludağ, Hülya Alper, and Abdurrahman Kasapoğlu provide the lexical and theological background against which any philosophical treatment of love must be situated (Kutluer 2020, pp. 386–88).

The Historiography of Davvānī and Post-Classical Islamic Ethical Philosophy in English-Language Scholarship

English-language engagement with post-classical Akhlāq literature remains comparatively thin and unevenly distributed across three types of contribution. The first is the reference entry: Newman's (1994) Encyclopaedia Iranica article and Terrier's (2020) chapter in the Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy remain the standard points of orientation for Davvānī's biography and philosophical profile, but neither undertakes a sustained analysis of his ethical thought. The second is the incorporated chapter, in which Davvānī appears as one voice among several within a broader argument; Ayubi's (2019) Gendered Morality is the clearest example, situating Davvānī alongside Ghazālī and Ṭūsī within a feminist-critical reading of family ethics, but subordinating the analysis of love to that larger argument. The third category, a dedicated, monograph- or article-length study of Davvānī's theory of love as a systematic whole, is, to the best of our knowledge, absent from the English-language literature.

This absence is the specific gap the present article addresses: not a gap in awareness of Davvānī's existence, but a gap in sustained, text-centred treatment of the concept that, as the argument developed below shows, organises his entire ethical system.

Within this picture, Davvānī occupies a curiously underexamined position. Despite the wide circulation of *Akhlāq-i Jalālī* in the post-classical Persianate and Ottoman intellectual

worlds, no monograph-length study in English has yet examined his theory of love as a systematic whole. Existing scholarship on Davvānī tends to treat him as a continuator of Ṭūsī, mentioning love only briefly within larger discussions of his ethics or political thought. Where his name appears in the literature on love, it is usually as one citation among several, rather than as the primary object of analysis. This is significant because Davvānī's treatment is not merely derivative: while he draws on Ṭūsī's fourfold classification of voluntary love and on Ibn Miskawayh's temporal typology, he integrates these inherited materials into a metaphysical framework grounded in *ḥubb-i dhātī* and the *ṣudūr*, return movement, and he ties this framework explicitly to a hierarchical account of social and political relations. The present study addresses this gap by offering a focused, text-centred reading of Davvānī's theory of love, attending equally to its ontological foundations, ethical degrees, and social implications, and by clarifying what Davvānī adds to, rather than merely repeats, the *Akhlāq* tradition that precedes him.

3. Methodology

This study employs a textual and conceptual analysis grounded in a close reading of *Akhlāq-i Jalālī, supplemented by a comparative engagement with the philosophical sources that* Davvānī himself draws upon. The primary text is drawn from the 1393/2014 Tehran edition published by Intishārāt i Iṭṭilāʿāt (Ettelaʿat Publishing House), with particular attention to chapters that thematically address love. This edition was selected because it is the most widely cited modern printing in Persian-language scholarship and reproduces the text in full rather than in an extract. The Persian original was consulted directly throughout, and no intermediary translation was relied upon for the analysis. All English renderings of passages from Akhlāq-i Jalālī are the authors' own unless otherwise attributed. Where Wickens's (1984) partial translation exists, our renderings have been checked against it, and any substantive divergence is noted. Three analytical steps structure the inquiry. First, key terms, *maḥabba*, *ʿishq*, *ulfa*, and *ḥubb-i dhātī*, are reconstructed in their lexical and philosophical senses, so that Davvānī's usage can be distinguished from that of his predecessors. Each term was reconstructed by first establishing its lexicographic range in classical Arabic dictionaries and in the specialised secondary literature (Uludağ 1991, 2020; Kasapoğlu 2010), then tracing its philosophical usage in the immediate sources Davvānī draws upon (Fārābī, Ibn Miskawayh, Ṭūsī), and finally checking every occurrence of the term within Akhlāq-i Jalālī itself against these two baselines to isolate what, if anything, Davvānī's usage adds to or departs from them. Among these, ulfa is treated as distinct from maḥabba and ʿishq: where the latter two presuppose a subject capable of will, ulfa names the compatibility-based attraction Davvānī also attributes to non-voluntary beings (minerals, elements, animals), and it is on this basis that Section 4 uses ulfa, rather than maḥabba, to describe love at levels of existence below the human. Second, the internal architecture of his account is mapped: the ontological grounding of love, its hierarchical degrees, and its social and political functions. Third, his positions are selectively compared with those of Fārābī, Ibn Miskawayh, Ṭūsī, and Kınalızâde to identify continuities, modifications, and original contributions. The aim of the comparison is not to construct a comprehensive historical genealogy but to clarify the distinctive contours of Davvānī's position. Throughout, the article works descriptively and analytically rather than evaluatively: it seeks to reconstruct what Davvānī argues and how his argument is internally organised, leaving normative assessment of his claims to subsequent work.

These four thinkers are not an arbitrary sample of the Akhlāq tradition but mark the direct textual chain within which Davvānī writes. Fārābī supplies the emanationist metaphysics of love that later Akhlāq authors inherit; Ibn Miskawayh establishes the virtue-ethical framework, grounded in Aristotelian moral psychology, through which love is first

disciplined into a hierarchy of attachments; Ṭūsī, in Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī, is the immediate Persian-language model that Davvānī reworks chapter by chapter in Akhlāq-i Jalālī, making him the closest point of comparison for assessing originality. Kınalızâde, writing after Davvānī and adapting Akhlāq-i Jalālī for an Ottoman Turkish readership, shows how Davvānī's own reorganisation of the tradition was received and transmitted forward. Comparing Davvānī against this specific sequence, therefore, allows the article to trace what he inherits from the tradition behind him and what he bequeaths to the tradition after him, rather than situating him against thinkers with no direct textual relationship to Akhlāq-i Jalālī.

4. The Nature of Love

With this methodological orientation established, the analysis begins with the most foundational question: what kind of thing is love for Davvānī, and how does he situate it within the broader Islamic philosophical vocabulary? The concept of maḥabba in Islamic thought has been approached in a multilayered way, extending beyond the individual emotional state to encompass ontological, social, psychological, and ethical dimensions (Kutluer 2020, pp. 386–88). Fakhry's account of how the Akhlāq tradition adapts Greek ethical categories to an Islamic framework (Fakhry 1991) is a useful frame for the terminological reconstruction that follows. Lexically, *maḥabba* is a noun derived from the root *ḥubb*, which is generally defined as "the opposite of hatred (*bughḍ*)." In the classical literature, the terms *mawadda* and *wudd* are also commonly used in the sense of "love" alongside *maḥabba* and *ḥubb*. A more intense, passionate, and overflowing form of love, however, is generally expressed by the term ʿishq (Uludağ 1991, pp. 18–21; 2020, pp. 384–86; Küçük 2015, pp. 61–77; Sînâ 2017, p. 94). In the Qurʾān, terms denoting love, particularly *al-maḥabba* and *al-wudd*, are frequently emphasised, and love is presented as a fundamental element of religious life (Toksöz 2018, pp. 194–205). It should be noted, however, that some authors regard love as not entirely encompassing the human being in the way *ʿishq* does, and as therefore unable to take its place (Ḥazm 2016, p. 69). In this respect, *maḥabba* is broad enough to include many persons or objects, whereas *ʿishq* expresses a more particular meaning (al-Ṣafāʾ 2014, pp. 220–21). To love is to feel an inclination toward a person or object.

In contrast, love itself denotes the totality of positive and good feelings that draw human beings closer to one another (Kasapoğlu 2010, pp. 99–149). The cosmological meanings the concept of *maḥabba* acquires in Islamic philosophy may be traced back to ancient Greek thought, as is clear from Shahrastānī's (d. 548/1153) reports concerning Empedocles (494–434 BCE). According to the views attributed to Empedocles, the first thing created by God comprises, within its essence, the principles of love and dominion together. All processes of becoming and transformation in the cosmic order are explained as the result of the opposition and polarisation that these two principles generate within the realm of existence (Shahrastanī 2011, p. 293; Kutluer 2020, pp. 386–88).

The human being stands at the centre of creation as a superior being and the very purpose of the order of existence. Bearing within itself both physical and metaphysical elements, the human being is described as the noblest of creatures (*ashraf al-makhlūqāt*). It thereby distinguishes itself from other beings, gaining ontological privilege. Because of this elevated position, the human being is defined as the one who bears the responsibility of being God's vicegerent (*khalīfa*) on earth (Bardakçı 2007, pp. 29–44; Akın 2007, pp. 131–41; Atay 2007, pp. 332–39). Love, regarded as a fruit of good character (Ghazālī 1998, pp. 360–61; Çapku 2011, pp. 135–52) and as a richness and serenity of the soul (Şimşek 2012, pp. 125–38), is, in religious terms, bound up with the doctrine of brotherhood among human beings, which requires that love manifest itself necessarily in the heart and in conduct. Indeed, all men God has made are worthy. It does not matter whether a person is good or bad or belongs to a different religion. The good human being is, of course,

higher than the bad one, but in the end, this is something to be decided between God and His servants (Küçükkaya 2017, pp. 167–86). In this context, Islam seeks to prevent social disintegration by prohibiting divisive attitudes such as falsehood, arrogance, rancour, and envy, and to establish an ethical order based on love by promoting mercy, mutual assistance, and the protection of the weak. For love, besides being an individual virtue (Tüfenkçi 2019, pp. 989–1005), is posited as the principle of unity, religious-ethical and philosophical, that incorporates men into a single organism (Düzgün 2008, pp. 176–94; Yeniterzi 1998, pp. 175–91). In this framework, the culture of living together, which forms the basis of social and political existence, depends upon mutual love, *ulfa* (harmonious social attachment), and the cultivation of deep social cohesion among individuals (Kasaboğlu 1964, pp. 172–73).

In Islamic ethical philosophy, the religious foundations of love are rooted in the Qurʾān and the Prophetic Sunnah, its practical and normative dimensions are developed within Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), its theoretical implications concerning God's love and being loved are examined in kalām (Islamic theology), and its spiritual and moral dimensions are elaborated in taṣawwuf (Sufism). Together, these disciplines have highlighted the central place of love in Islamic ethics from different perspectives.

Although the Qurʾān and the Sunnah constitute the primary sources for the Islamic understanding of love, this conception has been further developed in diverse ways within the disciplines of fiqh, kalām, and taṣawwuf. The Qurʾān emphasises both God's love for human beings and human beings' love for God, presenting piety (*taqwā*), patience, justice, benevolence, mercy, and noble character as manifestations of love. Likewise, the Prophetic traditions regard loving for the sake of God, mutual affection among believers, wishing for one's brother what one wishes for oneself, and loving the Prophet above all else as fundamental elements of faith and moral excellence. Within the field of fiqh, love is primarily considered in relation to the religious obligations and ethical responsibilities that regulate human conduct toward both God and fellow human beings. Duties such as worship, charity, justice, good neighbourliness, maintaining kinship ties, and social solidarity constitute the practical expression of love and fraternity within society. Accordingly, love is understood not merely as an inner emotion but as a moral value that must be embodied in action.

In kalām, the question of whether and in what sense God may be described as loving and lovable became a significant theological issue. The Jahmiyya and Muʿtazila, reluctant to attribute love to God in the same sense in which it is predicated of human beings, interpreted divine love in terms of God's will, grace, approval, and beneficence. Sufi thinkers, by contrast, maintained that God is genuinely both the Lover and the Beloved, thereby placing divine love at the centre of religious life. Consequently, the nature of divine love and its attribution to God emerged as an important doctrinal problem within Islamic theology. Within taṣawwuf, love occupies a central place in both the relationship between God and the human being and in the spiritual life more broadly. From the earliest generations of Sufis onward, the ideal of worshipping God not out of fear of punishment or hope for reward, but solely out of love for Him, became a defining feature of Sufi spirituality. Sufi authors frequently regarded *maḥabba* (love) as one of the highest spiritual stations, and virtues such as patience, gratitude, humility, justice, and mercy were understood as natural fruits of genuine love. Thus, in the Sufi tradition, love functions not merely as a moral virtue but as the animating principle of the soul's journey toward God (Uludağ 2020, pp. 384–86).

The virtue of love occupies a significant place in Islamic ethical philosophy and has been examined by numerous philosophers within the tradition. Among those who developed a distinctly philosophical treatment of the subject is Jalāl al-Dīn al-Davvānī. When considered from a holistic perspective, Davvānī's account presents love as a fundamental ontological principle that underlies existence itself and explains the orientation, harmony, and unity

that characterise relations among beings. In his thought, the ultimate source of love lies in the rational substance (*jawhar al-ʿaql*), and both natural and voluntary forms of motion are understood in relation to this underlying tendency toward perfection. Because love overcomes separation and brings about unity (*waḥda*), Davvānī regards it as superior even to justice, which functions primarily to establish balance among differences. At the same time, love manifests itself in different forms according to the nature of the beings in which it appears. In entities lacking will and rational cognition, attraction and harmony are expressed through concepts such as "natural inclination" and *ulfa* (affinity or concord). In contrast, tendencies toward separation are described as aversion or flight. The attraction of iron to a magnet, the mutual affinity of material substances, and the patterns of concord and discord observable among animals all represent different manifestations of these tendencies. By identifying such phenomena as expressions of an underlying natural orientation, Davvānī interprets love as the fundamental principle of unity, cohesion, and harmony operating throughout the entire order of being (Davvānī [1393] 2014, pp. 223–25).

Davvānī writes, "When the bond of love is established, the need for justice ceases, for love ontologically holds a position higher than justice." Indeed, love is a "natural unity" (waḥda), whereas justice is an artificial and external arrangement brought about by human intervention. Ancient tradition teaches that the natural is prior and better than the artificial (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 225). It can be said that Davvānī, on this point, is influenced by *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī*, since similar expressions can be found there as well. According to Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274), love too is more important than justice (Ṭūsī 2013, p. 247; Akyol 2017, pp. 295–320; Çilingir 2018, pp. 73–96). The same view is also held in *Akhlāq-i ʿAlāʾī*, for Kınalızâde (d. 979/1572), where, when love is present, justice recedes to a secondary place (Kınalızâde 2016, p. 384). Etymologically derived from *inṣāf* (literally, "to divide into two"), justice in its essence harbours duality and multiplicity (*kathra*).

Indeed, drawing on both the etymological meanings of the concepts of love and justice and on Davvānī's own reflections on the subject, Zahra Ayubi arrives at the following assessment: "while love constitutes a unifying force, justice, by virtue of demanding equal distribution, possesses an inherently divisive character. This conception is that love is grounded in unity. In contrast, justice, which is grounded in division, accords with Davvānī's view that human beings, if left entirely to their own devices, would not come to one another's aid through natural love alone." However, within Davvānī's teaching, once unity (*waḥdah*) is attained through love, the judgments engendered by duality become not merely unnecessary but altogether without expected benefit. Love, in this schema, is nothing less than the very substance of existence: no being whatsoever can be conceived apart from this essence. It follows, then, that the point of departure for love (*ishq*) is the substance of reason itself, and that the movement toward it is nothing other than ardent longing (*shawq*) (Ayubi 2019, p. 202–3).

However, in the state of unity attained through love, the rulings produced by duality are no longer needed, nor are any benefits expected from them. The fundamental substance of being is love. No being can be conceived independently of this substance. In this sense, the starting point of *ʿishq* is the substance of intellect, and the orientation toward it is yearning (*shawq*). All cyclical and voluntary motions in existence are connected to this love and stand as manifestations of the idea of universal unity. Davvānī's conception of love thus occupies a central place in his ethical and philosophical system: the virtue of love is grounded not in an emotional inclination but in a principle of being and unity. For Davvānī, love is equal to naturalness and unity, and in this respect, better than justice. Justice is a principle that maintains balance among differences, whereas love removes separation and creates unity. Hence, justice is unnecessary because of love. Davvānī says that love is a vital part of the very framework of existence: there can be no existence without love, and no

unity can be held together without love. In this framework, by tracing the origin of ʿishq to the substance of intellect, he transforms it into a cosmological and metaphysical principle. Love is the divine unity, whether intellect and will direct, which is regarded as cause and effect of the relation between beings. Indeed, Davvānī considers love to serve the purpose of unifying, regulating and perfecting the entire order of being. The method shows that, in his ethical philosophy, he sets love as a principle before justice and as an indispensable virtue in human achievement of perfection (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 225).

Davvānī extends this same terminology below the human level: he calls the magnet's attraction to iron and the cohesion of compounds ulfa, and the mutual repulsion of substances of opposite temperament (such as stone and vinegar) nafra, terms he also applies, respectively, to the harmony and discord observed among non-rational animals, to show that love and opposition are single phenomena that take different names at different levels of being (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 226).

Through such examples, the philosopher seeks to show that the concept of love is not confined to conscious, voluntary beings and that, at levels of existence devoid of will, it is expressed through different concepts. In this context, attractions and harmonies among elements, minerals, and animals are explained by the concept of "natural inclination" (ulfa). At the same time, disharmonies and tendencies of separation are designated as *nafra*. The philosopher's fundamental emphasis, then, is that the phenomena of love and opposition exhibit terminological differences according to levels of being. Still, in essence, they are different manifestations of natural orientations inherent in existence itself.

5. Types of Love

Having established that love, under varying designations, is a principle of orientation operative at every level of existence, Davvānī turns to its specifically human forms and the question of classification. For him, love within the human domain possesses a meaning far broader than the loyalty and friendship that arise among a few people alone. In this respect, love assumes distinct forms at different levels of the hierarchy of being. The philosopher relays the views of certain thinkers whom he refers to, without naming them, as the "later" (*mutaʾakhkhirūn*). According to Davvānī, these thinkers describe interactions based on temperamental compatibility in the world of inanimate beings, where will is not at issue, as "natural inclinations," and characterise separations arising from temperamental opposition not as ethical enmity but as *nafra*. In the human plane, for Davvānī, love divides into two principal categories: "natural love," such as a mother's affection for her child, and "voluntary love," such as a student's bond with his teacher. Davvānī notes that these types of love are also emphasised in Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī* (Davvānī [1393] 2014, pp. 226–27). Fārābī (d. 339/950) likewise distinguishes love into natural and voluntary kinds. This classification is best read against the emanationist cosmology of love that Chittick (2024) reconstructs for the wider Neoplatonic-Islamic tradition, the same inheritance that Davvānī draws on to ground these categories ontologically rather than treating them as a bare psychological typology.

We likewise encounter the distinction between natural and voluntary love in Confucius's teaching (d. 479 BCE). In this line of thought, familial love rests upon biological factors, whereas the love of friendship originates in conscious choice. In this respect, friendship-love stands as an element that more faithfully reflects a person's character and inclinations (Cabural 2025).

Dividing voluntary love into three classes, Fārābī holds that the first is love arising from participation in virtue. Such love is felt on account of a person's being virtuous and is regarded as the highest type of love. The second is love felt for the sake of benefit, which rests on the expectation of advantage and may end when the benefit ceases. The third is love felt

for pleasure, which rests on enjoyment and weakens once the pleasure ends. Accordingly, Fārābī determines the worth of love by the end on which it rests and regards love based on virtue as the highest form of love (Fārābī 1987, p. 52). When we turn to Ṭūsī's thought, we see that voluntary love is divided, in terms of its end, into pleasure, benefit, goodness, or a combination (murakkab) of these (Ṭūsī 2013, p. 249). Davvānī divides voluntary love into four kinds. The first is love that arises quickly and disappears quickly. The second is love that arises slowly and, once it has arisen, fades slowly. The third is love that arises slowly but disappears quickly. The fourth is love that arises quickly but fades slowly (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 226; Miskawayh 2013, p. 155; Avcı 2018, pp. 3021–33). Two things distinguish Davvānī's use of this fourfold scheme from Ibn Miskawayh's. First, whereas Ibn Miskawayh presents the classification primarily as a psychological typology, a taxonomy of how attachments form and dissolve in practice, Davvānī immediately maps the four types onto his prior distinction between pleasure-based, benefit-based, and goodness-based love, converting a descriptive psychology into an evaluative hierarchy in which durability functions as evidence of ontological depth. Second, Davvānī explicitly subordinates Ṭūsī's tripartite end-based classification (pleasure, benefit, goodness) to this temporal scheme, treating speed and durability of formation as the more fundamental axis and end-based motivation as derivative from it. Neither Ṭūsī nor Ibn Miskawayh makes this move; for both, the end-based and temporal descriptions of love remain parallel rather than hierarchically ordered. According to Davvānī, loves centred on pleasure or benefit are transient because their ends are quickly attained and quickly lost; love based on "goodness," which rests on a spiritual cohesion, is, by contrast, quick to form yet difficult to dissolve, and is therefore enduring. The composite (*murakkab*) love, which combines benefit and goodness, follows a middle course in both formation and dissolution, shaping the social and ethical fabric of existence (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 227; Ṭūsī 2013, p. 249).

5.1. The Degrees of Love

According to Jalāl al-Dīn al-Davvānī, love possesses different degrees, but it attains its highest degree in divine love. For him, the first and highest degree of love is love of God, since God is the true source of all goodness and perfection (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 235; Tillich 2003, pp. 461–71; Alper 2006, pp. 5–19). The reality of this love arises in the gnostics (*ʿārifūn*), who, to the extent possible, become acquainted with the divine attributes of beauty (*jamāl*) and majesty (*jalāl*); for, according to Davvānī, true love is not realised without *maʿrifa*. Hence, the claim of divine love made by one devoid of knowledge and *maʿrifa* is to be regarded as a delusion far from the truth. He emphasises that divine love must be grounded in knowledge and consciousness. Davvānī particularly underscores that this is the highest degree of love, for at this level love turns toward God alone and does not admit of associating partners with Him. Because divine love gathers all human orientations into a single truth, it is regarded as one of the most perfect manifestations of the unity of God (*tawḥīd*). So, love in Davvānī's thought is not a simple emotional inclination but a metaphysical virtue based on knowledge directed towards ontological truth and capable of leading the human being to the highest degree of perfection (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 235; Yargıcı 2016, pp. 784–98).

The second grade of love is, as the philosopher says, paternal love. This love is different from other loves in that it is based upon the cause of existence. For him, the immediate cause of the child's coming into existence and of his bodily upbringing is the father. This love is ontologically based. Davvānī particularly emphasises that the love of the teacher and learner should be encompassed within this degree, for the teacher is the cause of the human being's spiritual perfection and moral training. In this respect, the teacher is considered a

"spiritual father." Indeed, since the soul is superior to the body, the teacher's value may be considered higher than the father's, since the father is the cause of mortal life.

In contrast, the teacher is the cause of eternal life. For this reason, love for the teacher is positioned beneath love for the true Creator but above parental love (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 235). Davvānī further notes that love for the founder of religion (shāriʿ) manifests itself most strongly within this degree. Love for the shāriʿ is, after love of God, the firmest and strongest of all loves, since he provides the highest guidance directing the human being to the right path. The ḥadīth stating that love for the Prophet must surpass a person's love for himself, his family, and his children supports this understanding. Likewise, love for the rightly guided caliphs (rāshidūn), the imams of religion, and the scholars is, in truth, an extension of love for the Prophet. Such love bears high ethical and metaphysical value insofar as it directs the human being toward those who guide him to happiness in both this world and the next. Thus, the second degree of love is grounded as love directed toward the causes that bestow existence and perfection, and it plays a central role in the human being's journey toward perfection (Davvānī [1393] 2014, pp. 235–36).

The degrees of love vary with the ontological proximity of human relationships and their social function. The third degree is the love of the people for the Sultan and of the Sultan for the people. This love rests on the relationship of mutual responsibility and need between ruler and ruled. Some thinkers hold that the subject's love for the Sultan is stronger than their love for the father, owing to the Sultan's role in securing social order and protecting the welfare of the people, since a regular social life is impossible without political authority. Just as a father governs and protects his child, so too does the sultan rule and watch over his people (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 237; Güzel 2018, pp. 43–55). For this reason, Davvānī characterises the true sovereign, the one who holds the reins of governance, through the qualities of wisdom, justice, courage, compassion, moderation, and a sense of responsibility and moral virtue toward his people (Newman 1994; Abachi et al. 2017, p. 99).

The fourth degree is the love of friendship and partnership. Davvānī notes that each type of love has a position appropriate to its own degree, and that confusing these degrees leads to injustice and corruption. Treachery in friendship and loyalty is regarded as graver than material harm, since such betrayal pertains to spiritual values. Stressing that justice must be observed in the relations of love, Davvānī views as an ethical necessity the realisation of a form of love appropriate to each category of being. Accordingly, love for God requires turning toward Him and obeying Him; the requirement of love for the prophets and religious leaders is to follow their path and show them respect; the requirement of love for sultans is loyalty and obedience; the requirement of love for parents is service and goodness; and the requirement of love among human beings is mercy, kindness, and cohesion (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 237).

Davvānī also analyses the relationship of love between the benefactor and the beneficiary. For him, the love of one who bestows favour for the recipient is stronger than the love the recipient feels for him, since the giver wishes the continuance of what he has given and takes care to preserve it. The receiver, by contrast, often loves the gift itself and only indirectly loves the giver. For this reason, the benefactor possesses a direct love, because he loves the very act of beneficence, while the love of the recipient is, in most cases, accidental (*ʿaraḍī*). In sum, in Davvānī's thought, love is a multilayered virtue with both ontological and ethical foundations: shaped by justice and a sense of duty across all types of relationships, it preserves both individual and social order (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 237). Davvānī's view, that the one who receives a kindness in fact loves not the benefactor, but the object bestowed by him, or, put differently, that pleasure and benefit are what take precedence, finds support in certain strands of contemporary cognitive science as well.

The nature of the bond between benefactor and beneficiary in relations of love differs, and in most cases, the love of the benefactor is stronger. The one who does good resembles a person who has obtained a benefit through labour and toil and so wishes for the preservation and continuance of his good deed; the recipient, by contrast, often fails to appreciate the worth of a benefit obtained without effort. For this reason, it is also held that a mother's love is stronger than a father's, since the mother bears greater toil and hardship in the upbringing of the child. This is explained by the fact that human beings become more attached to that which is the product of their own labour. Hence, according to Davvānī, the love of the benefactor for the beneficiary is generally greater than the converse (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 237).

Davvānī further states that the source of the highest type of love is the love whose origin is the true good and absolute perfection. This love rests not on bodily pleasures but on intellectual and spiritual delight, and it is directed toward the very essence of the soul (Terrier 2020, p. 410). For this reason, it admits no change or corruption: the causes of gossip, conflict, and rupture observable in other types of love have no effect within its domain. This type of love is connected to the highest spiritual delight that arises when the human being, freed from preoccupations of the lower self, contemplates true unity. According to the philosopher, this is the highest degree of perfection. At this level, the human being attains true beatitude and abiding happiness. Thus, in his thought, love, though associated at its lowest level with benefit and pleasure, is conceived at its highest level as a virtue oriented toward true good and bringing the human being to metaphysical perfection (Davvānī [1393] 2014, pp. 237–38).

We find that Davvānī's characterisation of the supreme form of love as directed toward God is formulated in Augustine (d. 430) through the concept of *caritas*. Indeed, the essence of *caritas* lies in human love directed toward the absolute and immutable Being, for it is through love directed toward the perfect Being that the human being can attain true love and ultimate happiness (Tian 2024).

Davvānī grounds the highest degree of love in a metaphysical conception of being and ties the ultimate source of love to the very beginning of the ontological order. For him, the chain of being arises through a process of emanation (ṣudūr) and theophany (tajallī) from the unseen world (ʿālam al-ghayb) to the world of witnessing (ʿālam al-shahāda) by divine will and power. The first being to come forth in this process is the luminous and simple substance which the philosophers call the "First Intellect," which some scholars call the "First Knowledge," and which the people of truth designate as the "Muḥammadan Reality" (al-ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya). All beings that flow from it, both epistemically and ontologically, are born of this substance. Its knowledge encompasses everything that is or shall be. Therefore, the order of being comes to the material world by a gradual process of actualisation from potency to act (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 239). Davvānī's teachings recall the ideas of the Neoplatonist Plotinus (A.D. 205–270). Plotinus defined love as the yearning that emanates from the transcendent, absolute One and returns to it. In other words, love is the desire to purify oneself from material, lower elements and to reach the supreme reality, the true source of being (Plotinus 1991, p. 547; Kurtoğlu 2000, pp. 65–66).

The world is the scene of change and transformation, in which divine theophanies are manifested. In this order, the perfection of the human being is possible only through the apprehension of the realities of beings and the turning towards their ultimate source. This ontological insight generates the highest form of love, for real love is an orientation toward the first source of being and toward absolute perfection. When the soul is liberated from the preoccupations of this world and can lift the veil over truth, it attains an abiding happiness. For Davvānī, then, love is not merely an ethical emotion; it is an ontological orientation developed by insight into the order of being and that elevates the human being

to metaphysical truth and to the highest degree of perfection (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 239). The order of being is a hierarchical process, of the nature of divine wisdom, running from the beginning to the end, and returning, in a circular structure, to its source. It is in this process that the human being is formed as a synthesis of the perfections of the previous stages of being. It is placed in the rank of the noblest of the races of animals. The human being develops an intellect that reflects the sacred intellect and serves as the fundamental link between the human soul and the highest realm. So, intellect constructs a bridge for the human being between the beginning and the end. Moreover, the movements of descent and ascent complete the circle of being. Davvānī explains the ontological position of the human being within this comprehensive whole, stating that the beginning of the book of being is the sacred intellect, and its end is the human intellect (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 240).

The movement and change which are observable at every level of being are, in fact, the manifestation of a desire for the divine source within this ontological structure. In material beings, this motion is expressed as physical change; in the human soul, as intellectual and cognitive movement. According to the people of truth, this orientation is nothing but the reflection of divine love, the "theophany of the essence to itself", i.e., *ḥubb-i dhātī* (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 240). Indeed, since love springs forth from a divine source, it is itself a divine emotion (Plato 2024, 178a, p. 12). Accordingly, love is not merely a psychological feeling but an ontological principle and a cause of motion operating throughout all the layers of being. In sum, in Davvānī's thought, love is conceived as a metaphysical principle effective at every stage from the beginning to the end of the order of being, orienting the human being toward his own source and bringing him to the highest degree of perfection.

Jalāl al-Dīn al-Davvānī classifies human ethical orientations and degrees of attachment to the good according to three principal foundations: innate disposition (*fiṭra*), rational apprehension, and religious guidance. In his view, some individuals remain naturally distant from evil due to the purity of their innate constitution. Although rare, such individuals represent the highest category of human excellence and embody the most perfect ethical state. A second group avoids evil through rational reflection, recognizing its ugliness and harmful consequences through intellectual discernment. The third group, comprising the majority of humanity, abstains from evil primarily on religious grounds, motivated by the promise of reward or the fear of punishment. While this final category appears to be guided by external incentives, Davvānī emphasizes the indispensable role of the *sharīʿa* in directing individuals toward moral perfection. Just as water enables the safe consumption of food and prevents choking, religious guidance protects the soul from spiritual harm and facilitates its progress toward virtue.

On this basis, Davvānī establishes a hierarchy of ethical perfection in which the highest degree is attained when the good becomes firmly rooted in human nature itself and avoidance of evil arises spontaneously rather than through deliberation or external motivation. This level, he maintains, characterizes the prophets and the most virtuous among the righteous. Love and ethical orientation are therefore determined by the degree of inner purification achieved by the individual. The highest form of love emerges from an uncorrupted and voluntary inclination toward the good itself, unconditioned by fear, self-interest, or expectation of reward. In this respect, Davvānī presents love not merely as an emotion or moral disposition but as an index of spiritual maturity and ontological perfection, reflecting the extent to which the human soul has become aligned with the ultimate good (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 240).

Davvānī classifies the phenomena of love and *ʿishq* by their ethical and ontological foundations. He emphasises that *ʿishq* cannot be present in plural form within a single heart, and that its very nature thus expresses a particularised orientation. The cause of *ʿishq* is treated under two main headings. The first is the excessive form of the desire for

pleasure and enjoyment, designated as a negative and lower type of *ʿishq* called "animal *ʿishq*" (*ʿishq-i ḥayawānī*). The second is the form grounded in the intensification of the desire for the good and is regarded as positive; this is termed "rational *ʿishq*" (*ʿishq-i nafsānī*) (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 228). Forms of ʿishq centred on benefit or pleasure are emotional inclinations, especially observable in the young and are usually transient. Such forms of ʿishq can preoccupy the human being and, at times, weaken rational equilibrium. However, Davvānī does not reject ʿishq altogether; on the contrary, it can be said that he implies that, when properly directed, it can carry the human being toward higher ends (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 231; Varol 1984, pp. 53–64).

The philosopher analyses the foundations of friendship and loyalty from a socio-psychological perspective, drawing on age groups and human types. Among the young, friendship and loyalty are mostly grounded in pleasure and enjoyment, so that when pleasure ceases, the relationship changes. Among older, more experienced individuals, friendships rest on mutual benefit and therefore endure longer. Among the wise, however, the ultimate cause of friendship and loyalty is the "good" or *khayr*, and because the good does not change, such relationships gain permanence. The composite nature of the human being is grounded in the relativity and defectiveness of bodily pleasures. By contrast, the human soul is held to be a substance free of matter, oriented toward pure pleasure. This pure pleasure is identified as the "delight of wisdom" (*lazzat al-ḥikma*) and constitutes the highest degree of love. At its ultimate stage, this degree is named "perfect *ʿishq*" or "divine love." Thus, the philosopher places ʿishq on a scale of processes leading from biological pleasure to metaphysical perfection and says that the most perfect love is the love of the divine (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 228).

For Davvānī, love is intimately connected to both the ontological structure of reality and the soul's journey toward perfection. As he observes, "between natures wholly different there cannot be a complete union, but where there are likeness and compatibility there can occur an approach and *ulfa* between them." Accordingly, wherever genuine unity exists, love is also present. Material beings, however, are composite and therefore subject to separation, conflict, and change. The forms of unity and love that arise at this level of existence are consequently limited and impermanent. By contrast, true and enduring union is possible among simple and immaterial substances, since they are free from the divisiveness and multiplicity associated with matter. It is at this higher ontological level that the soul, having purified itself from bodily impurities and liberated itself from attachment to sensory pleasures, turns toward the realm of holiness and contemplates true beauty. Drawn by the attraction of divine manifestation, the soul gradually loosens its worldly attachments and ascends toward the station of unity (*waḥda*), thereby attaining the highest degree of love. While bodily pleasures and the forms of love associated with them are transient and incomplete, spiritual love is enduring and perfected. The soul's orientation toward the Divine and its attainment of nearness to the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*) thus constitute the fullest realization of human happiness. In Davvānī's ethical philosophy, this state represents not only the culmination of spiritual perfection but also the highest expression of love as a moral and ontological virtue (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 229).

Love for Jalāl al-Dīn al-Davvānī is a reality which grows purer to the same extent that the ontological purification of the soul is achieved, and which is oriented towards perfection. He says that the restrictions and the turbidity arising from the composite structure of being make the pleasures and delights related to material elements wanting and transient. The soul, on the other hand, when released from its corporeal integuments and freed from the influence of the bodily faculties, enjoys purer pleasure and joy. This pure pleasure is a state of spiritual apprehension, a contemplation of the unity of the divine essence beyond names and attributes by the light of inner sight (baṣīra). However, Davvānī observes

that the duality presupposed by the consciousness of membership and orientation is not easily dispelled; the experience of total unity therefore requires going beyond imagination, illusion, and the agitations of the lower self. He believes that the real contemplation and the supreme spiritual pleasure are possible only in a state of detachment (tajarrud) and inward purification. In this situation, the human being constantly awaits the lifting of the veils over being and the disclosure of truth. The most perfect love is to desire the nearness of God. In Davvānī's thought, then, love is an ethical and metaphysical virtue, a process of perfection that begins with bodily pleasures, attains spiritual detachment, and ends in the experience of unity (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 229).

In short, in Davvānī's thought, love is not simply an emotional inclination but a multi-layered virtue which is rooted in the ontological structure of the order of being and rises in parallel with the process of perfection of the human soul. The degrees of love form a hierarchy of divine love. The forms of love expressed toward parents, teachers, prophets, rulers, and fellow human beings take on importance because of their roles as causes of existence, perfection, and social order. In this respect, we find that society's demand for love is, in the main, inevitable (Ocakzade 2019, pp. 31–48).

According to Davvānī, love is possible only by knowledge and ma'rifa, and it reaches its highest degree by orientation towards the divine. This orientation is the most perfect expression of tawhid and the basic condition of lasting happiness. Ontologically, love is the principle of motion towards all the degrees of being, the reflection of ḥubb-i dhātī, which directs all existing things to their first source. Through intelligence, the human being becomes the conscious subject of love, the being that connects beginning and end in this ontological circle. The soul's purification from the attachments of the body and its acquisition of spiritual detachment enable love to ascend from its lower levels, based on benefit and pleasure, to a metaphysical ʿishq aimed at the true good. Hence, Davvānī's notion of love is found precisely at the intersection of ethical maturity, ontological insight and metaphysical perfection. Thus, love is presented as the fundamental principle that brings the human being back to his own source, gives meaning to the individual and to the social order, and leads him to ultimate happiness.

5.2. Davvānī in Relation to His Predecessors

The classification developed above can now be set against its immediate antecedents. From Fārābī, Davvānī inherits the derivation of love from emanation. Still, where Fārābī treats ḥubb as a cosmological description of how the emanated order coheres, Davvānī elevates ḥubb-i dhātī into the single generative principle from which the ethical and social hierarchy of loves is deduced, rather than leaving the cosmological and ethical registers as separate discussions. From Ibn Miskawayh, Davvānī inherits the disciplining of love into graded, rule-governed attachments subject to justice. Still, Ibn Miskawayh's grading is presented primarily as a virtue-ethical taxonomy, without the ontological derivation Davvānī supplies. Ṭūsī, in Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī, is closest to Davvānī in structure and is Davvānī's most direct model; Davvānī follows Ṭūsī's basic inventory of loves but refuses Ṭūsī's subordination of the cosmological register to a background role, making ontology rather than voluntary virtue the foundation of the hierarchy. Kınalızâde, writing after Davvānī, largely adopts Davvānī's expanded, ontologically grounded hierarchy for an Ottoman audience, which is itself indirect evidence that later readers recognised Davvānī's reorganisation, rather than Ṭūsī's or Ibn Miskawayh's, as the more complete framework worth transmitting.

6. The Influence of Religion on Love Among Human Beings in Social Life

The foregoing analysis of love's degrees has treated social relationships, those between ruler and people, between benefactor and beneficiary, between friends, primarily from the

perspective of their ontological grounding and ethical structure. Davvānī, however, also examines the conditions under which love at the social level is produced, sustained, and institutionally reinforced. It is here that religion enters his account as an indispensable factor. For Davvānī, love is not merely a natural disposition that human beings happen to find themselves with; it is a virtue that requires cultivation, and the primary institution of that cultivation is religious practice itself. For him, love grounded in goodness is enduring and not subject to corruption, whereas love centred on pleasure or benefit may be directed toward both good and bad people and quickly disappears once its accidental causes vanish. Davvānī explains the way in which human beings draw close to one another in difficult circumstances or in conditions of exile by appealing to the human being's natural inclination toward fellowship and cohesion. This natural inclination toward *uns* shows that human perfection can be realised only by living with members of one's own species and by establishing social bonds. Hence, although love is an individual feeling, it is also a necessary element in the formation of society and the establishment of civilisation. Davvānī also emphasises the role of religion in producing social love and unity. According to him, what reason regards as good, the *sharīʿa* likewise regards as good, and to strengthen social cohesion, it has encouraged the collective performance of acts of worship. The performance of the five daily prayers in congregation, the weekly Friday prayer, the gathering of large communities at the two festival prayers each year, and finally the pilgrimage all bear the wisdom of enabling people to become acquainted, to draw close to one another, and to develop feelings of love, brotherhood, and unity among themselves. Thus, in Davvānī's thought, love is conceived not only as a natural inclination arising from the human being's ontological structure but also as a central ethical virtue that is reinforced through religious practices and that secures social wholeness (Davvānī [1393] 2014, pp. 230–31).

For him, the formation of bonds of love and friendship among people at the neighbourhood, city, and country levels secures social happiness and order. For this reason, the rulings of the *sharīʿa* draw individuals out of solitude and orient them toward unity and cohesion; the encouragement of congregational worship serves the same end. Davvānī attributes the greater merit of congregational prayer over individual prayer to the strengthening of social love and closeness. Likewise, the Friday and festival prayers, as well as the pilgrimage, gather people together and reinforce feelings of fellowship, brotherhood, and unity. Religion thus plays a role in supporting the inclination toward common life present in human nature and in securing social wholeness. For the philosopher, love is a fundamental principle that orders human life on both the individual and social planes, and the rulings of religion likewise aim to strengthen this bond of love (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 231).

Political authority, for Davvānī, is continuous with this religious cultivation of love rather than a separate mechanism alongside it. Just as congregational worship draws individuals out of isolation, the ruler's task, on Davvānī's account, is to secure the conditions, order, security, and protection of the weak, under which those bonds of fellowship can form and endure (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 237). Where religious practice supplies the recurring occasions for love to be exercised, political authority supplies the stability without which those occasions could not take place at all; the two are, on this reading, complementary institutions serving the single end of social love that Davvānī describes.

Davvānī continues by stating that love can be discussed not only in its divine dimension but also in its worldly dimensions. Love may be founded on pleasure or profit, but such love is short and may vanish on diverse occasions. Real and lasting love, on the other hand, is rooted in goodness, khayr, and benevolence (Davvānī [1393] 2014, pp. 231–32). Love, an innate tendency that arises from the ontological constitution of the human being, is a cardinal virtue, according to him. It is permanent when moral values guide it, and it

guarantees the perfection of the individual and the completeness of society when fortified by religious rituals (Ayubi 2019).

Love-based relationships may involve tensions and complaints, depending on the parties' differing expectations, needs, and positions. This is especially the case in hierarchical relations (ruler and subjects, master and servant, rich and poor, for example), where the parties commonly make demands from each other that are absent or difficult to fulfil. Davvānī states that such problems can be solved only through the observance of justice. The bond of love is stabilised by the mutual satisfaction of each partner's rights and duties. Therefore, justice is a necessary condition for the preservation of love in social relations.

Davvānī also emphasises that the love of the good is of a different nature, based not on pleasure or benefit, but on a spiritual bond and the union of hearts. It is free of negativity, such as separation, conflict, blame, and complaint, and has the quality of permanence because its source is the unchanging "perfect good." This is supported by the philosopher's statement that "the friend is in truth like you but in form different from you". This kind of friendship is very precious, in fact, of the order of an elixir, according to Davvānī, because most people associate love with pleasure and benefit and therefore do not understand the value of love based on true goodness. Goodness-centred loves are durable; benefit-centred loves are fleeting and die with their accidental causes. Again, the love of the Sultan and the people is founded on grace and beneficence, and the love of a father for his child is founded on the relationship of right and responsibility; these are another category (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 232). In Davvānī's thought, love has degrees, varying according to the source of love, but it assumes its most perfect form in friendship, based on spiritual unity and goodness. Such friendship is a fundamental virtue ensuring the perfection of individual character and the continuity of social order (Ayubi 2019).

7. Love Within the Family

If the foregoing sections have shown how love operates at the levels of ontology, ethics, and social community, it remains to examine the domain in which Davvānī's hierarchical account of love is most concretely grounded: the family. It is within the family that the human being first encounters love not as a freely chosen attachment but as a relation structured by ontological necessity, the necessity that is, of the bond between cause and effect, between the being that gives existence and the being that receives it. The family is, for Davvānī, neither a private retreat from the social and political world nor a merely biological unit. It is the primary domain in which the abstract principle of love as a cause of being is most immediately and concretely embodied, and in which the logic of love, of care flowing from cause to effect, of asymmetric debt, of sacrificial investment, is first encountered and learned.

According to Davvānī, the love between parents and child has an ontological foundation grounded in the relation of being, which distinguishes it from other types of love. For him, the father regards the child as a continuation of his own being, as, in a sense, a copy of his very self, and considers that his bodily and characterological traits are transmitted to the child. For this reason, the father wishes that all the perfections he wishes for himself should also be realised in the child, and he even rejoices that the child surpasses him. The success and superiority of the child are perceived as an extension of the father's own perfection. The father also hopes that, through the child, his aims and ends will continue beyond himself; he therefore regards the child's existence as a kind of second permanence (*baqā'*). According to Davvānī, although most fathers do not grasp this in detailed conscious reflection, they perceive it through an intuitive insight that is sufficient for the formation of love. By contrast, the love the child feels for the father is, by reason of the relation of ontological cause and effect, generally weaker and arises later. For the child apprehends his existence after that of

the father and at first cannot grasp the father's value without having benefited from him. Hence, the child's love grows over time and strengthens as consciousness develops. The *sharīʿa*'s particular emphasis on love and respect for parents is meant to compensate for this natural delay. Davvānī's ontological logic of cause and effect implies. However, he does not dwell on the point at length, that love among siblings occupies a lower degree than parental love: siblings share a single ontological level rather than standing in a cause–effect relation to one another, which is why, on his account, their bond also carries a greater potential for rivalry and conflict than the parent–child bond does (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 234). In Davvānī's thought, then, types of love within the family are differentiated according to degrees of ontological proximity, with the strongest love arising in parental love grounded in the relation of being a cause of existence (Davvānī [1393] 2014, pp. 233–34).

Davvānī sees social love in various forms within hierarchical relations, grounded in mutual responsibility. The smooth functioning of these relations requires justice and a sense of duty. "The love of the ruler for his subjects is like that of a father to his child, for the ruler has the duty to defend, watch over, and show mercy to his subjects," he says. The love of the subjects for the Sultan, on the other hand, is like the love of the child for his father, and is expressed in obedience, loyalty and respect. Love among members of society is compared to brotherly love; it is a love based on mutual help, mercy, and sharing. Davvānī regards the performance of the duties of respect and service to the ruler on the part of every individual as necessary for the preservation of social order, since the existence of just government is the fundamental condition for the security and tranquillity of society. Those who cannot offer material service can still contribute to this wholeness through prayer and good intentions. Each person's demand for a station and a right commensurate with what he deserves helps establish justice and strengthen the bonds of love. Mercy and support between people, like brothers and sisters, preserve social order, diffuse the light of justice, and allow social life to go on. Otherwise, the breakdown of order, social disorder and the disruption of balance are unavoidable. Therefore, love, which is an individual feeling, occupies a central position in Davvānī's thought as an ethical principle that guarantees order between the ruler and the ruled, among the members of society and in the social structure (Davvānī [1393] 2014, p. 234).

The family, in sum, is for Davvānī the ontological foundation of both social and political life, the domain in which love is first encountered in its most concrete form and from which its inner logic, care flowing from cause to effect, asymmetric debt, sacrificial investment, radiates outward into the full structure of human existence. With this foundation established across its ontological, ethical, social, and familial dimensions, it is now possible to assess the overall architecture of Davvānī's theory and its contribution to Islamic ethical thought.

8. Conclusions

The foregoing analysis has shown that Jalāl al-Dīn al-Davvānī's treatment of love in *Akhlāq-i Jalālī* is neither a simple repetition of the *Akhlāq* tradition that precedes him nor a marginal supplement to it. Rather, it represents a systematic reconceptualisation of love as the organising principle of being, ethics, and politics simultaneously, a move that distinguishes Davvānī from both Ṭūsī and Ibn Miskawayh, from whom he draws extensively, and places him in a distinctive position within post-classical Islamic ethical thought.

What Davvānī inherits from his predecessors is a conceptual framework: Ibn Miskawayh's fourfold classification of voluntary love, Ṭūsī's hierarchical ordering of the degrees of love, and the conviction that love surpasses justice as the ultimate principle of social cohesion. His originality lies not in these inherited elements themselves but in the metaphysical foundation he provides for them. By grounding love in the notion of *ḥubb-i dhātī*, the divine essence's self-love and self-disclosure, and by embedding this notion within the

emanationist schema of *ṣudūr* and return, Davvānī elevates love from an ethical disposition to a universal cosmological principle.

The idea that love serves as the animating force of a cosmos structured through emanation and return is not unique to Davvānī. Rather, it belongs to the broader Neoplatonic legacy of Islamic philosophy, transmitted through the pseudo-Empedoclean tradition discussed in Section 4 and subsequently developed by philosophers from Ibn Sīnā onward. Davvānī's contribution, therefore, does not consist in formulating a new cosmological premise. Instead, it lies in the systematic manner in which he deploys this inherited premise. Whereas Ibn Miskawayh and Ṭūsī generally treat the cosmological and ethical dimensions of love as related yet analytically distinct domains, Davvānī derives the entire ethical and social hierarchy of love directly and continuously from the single ontological principle of *ḥubb-i dhātī*. His originality is thus architectural rather than doctrinal. It resides not in the introduction of a new metaphysical doctrine but in the rigorous integration of an inherited cosmological principle into a comprehensive ethical and social theory. By establishing a continuous line of derivation from divine self-love to the various forms of human love and social relations, Davvānī offers a distinctive reformulation of the *Akhlāq* tradition, one whose significance has yet to receive adequate recognition in the existing secondary literature.

Three implications of this reconceptualisation deserve emphasis. First, Davvānī's hierarchy of love, from divine love grounded in *maʿrifa*, through parental and pedagogical love, to the bonds of ruler and people and the ties of friendship, is not merely a taxonomy of relationships. It is an ontological map in which each degree of love corresponds to a degree of proximity to being's first source. To love rightly, at any level, is to participate in the structure of reality itself; to love wrongly, or to confuse the degrees, is not merely an ethical failure but a form of ontological disorder. This gives his account an internal coherence and philosophical rigour that goes beyond the moral cataloguing characteristic of earlier *Akhlāq* works.

Second, Davvānī's positioning of love above justice has consequences that extend beyond the ethical domain into the political. Justice, he argues, presupposes duality and difference; it is an instrument for managing multiplicity. Love, by contrast, produces unity. This means that for Davvānī, the ideal political community is not one governed by the perfect administration of justice, but one in which bonds of love make the full apparatus of justice largely unnecessary. The role of the sovereign is therefore not merely to distribute rights and punishments but to cultivate the conditions under which love can flourish, a vision of politics grounded in ethical ontology rather than in jurisprudence or power alone.

Third, Davvānī's integration of religious practice into his social theory of love is philosophically significant. The congregational forms of Islamic worship, the daily prayers, the Friday prayer, the festival prayers, and the pilgrimage, are presented not merely as duties but as the institutional embodiment of love's social dimension. Religion, in this reading, is the practical architecture through which the natural human inclination toward *uns* and fellowship is cultivated and sustained across the full range of social life. This gives Davvānī's account a normative concreteness that purely metaphysical treatments of love lack.

Taken together, these findings suggest that Davvānī's theory of love constitutes a more ambitious and more unified philosophical project than the existing literature has recognised. He is not simply transmitting the ethical heritage of Fārābī, Ibn Miskawayh, and Ṭūsī to a later Persianate readership; he is reorganising that heritage around a metaphysical core, *ḥubb-i dhātī* and the circle of emanation and return, which gives the entire ethical edifice a new foundation. Future research might profitably examine how this conception of love was received and developed in the Ottoman ethical tradition, particularly in Kınalızāde's *Akhlāq-i ʿAlā'ī*, and whether Davvānī's metaphysical grounding of love had any lasting influence on the political thought of the post-Timurid world. What the present study has

established is that any adequate account of love in Islamic ethical philosophy must take Davvānī seriously, not as a footnote to Ṭūsī, but as a thinker who brought the concept of love to a new level of philosophical integration.

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