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Love - Part I*

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Abstract



In the following excerpt (of *al-Maḥajjat al-Bayḍā' fī tahdhīb al-Iḥyā'*), we read that one will attain the ultimate end of spiritual stages if one truly loves God. In spite of the fact that some believe in the impossibility of loving God, one may show, by referring to its being obligatory and to the contents of some verses of the Glorious Qur'an, that experiencing love for God is possible. After discussing that love entails perceiving in some ways what we love, the author explicates that love can be divided into five types: (1) self-love, love for one's survival, and love for one's perfection; (2) loving those who have benefited us; (3) loving benefactors who help people even if they have not benefited us; (4) loving anything beautiful whether its beauty is external or internal; and (5) loving someone because of shared homogeneous character traits. In the context of perceiving, we find out that the author contends that man, in contrast to non-human beings, has a special power, i.e. the light of insight, through which s/he can perceive the beauty and goodness of non-sensible objects including generosity, courage, piety, chastity, and so forth. These traits have their roots in two main attributes: knowledge and power.

Keywords

love, possibility of loving God, types of love, light of insight.

* Translated by Yasser Pouresmaeil

Introduction

Now, love (*maḥabba*) of God the Almighty the Majestic is the ultimate end of the stages and the highest pinnacle of the degrees. Thus, any stage after the apprehension of love is but a fruit among its fruits and a branch among its branches—stages such as longing (*shawq*), intimacy (*uns*), contentment (*riḍā*), and their family. And love is not preceded by any stage unless it is a prelude among its preludes, such as repentance (*tawba*), patience (*ṣabr*), asceticism (*zuhd*), and so on. And other stages, as scarce as they are, the hearts harbor the belief in their possibility, but the faith in the love of God the Almighty the Majestic is also scarce to the extent that some scholars have denied its possibility, suggesting that it means nothing but obeying God the Almighty the Majestic; the reality of love, however, is impossible except along with homogeneity and similarity. And since they have denied love, they have denied intimacy, longing, and the pleasure of supplication, as well as other concomitants and associations of love. We need to unveil this matter, and in this book, we mention religious evidence of love, then articulate its reality and means, and then state that no one is entitled to love except God the Almighty the Majestic. Next, we explain that the greatest of pleasures is the pleasure of looking at the face of God the Exalted, then we state the reason why the pleasure of the looking in the afterlife is additional to the knowledge in this world.

Thereafter, we will articulate the factors reinforcing the love of God the Exalted, then we state the reason why people differ in their love of God. Later, we explain why intellects fail to know God the Almighty the Majestic, then we state the meaning of longing, and subsequently we articulate the love of God the Almighty the Majestic for His servant.

Afterwards, we talk about the signs of the servant's love for God the Exalted and then state the meaning of intimacy with God the Exalted. Subsequently, we will talk about the meaning of expansion

in intimacy and then about the meaning of contentment, explaining its virtue. Next, we will state its reality and then explain that contentment is not contradicted by supplication, aversion to sins, or refraining from sins. Finally, we will talk about the stories of lovers and miscellaneous words of lovers.

Religious Evidence for the Servant's Love for God the Exalted

Know that the nation [of Muslims] has consensus over the fact that love for God the Almighty the Majestic and for His Messenger is obligatory, and nothing can be obliged unless it exists. How can love [for God] be interpreted as obedience when obedience follows love and is its fruit? Thus, first there should be love, and then the beloved would be obeyed. One piece of religious evidence as a proof for love of God the Almighty the Majestic is His word “people who He loves and who love Him” (*Qur'an* 5: 59) and the word of the Exalted, “[T]he faithful have the most ardent love for Allah” (*Qur'an* 2: 160). And this is a reason for proving love for God and for its varying degrees. Moreover, the Prophet (s) has made the love of God a condition for faith in many narrations, where Abū Razīn al-Aqīlī said: “O the Messenger of Allah, what is faith?” He said: “Faith is when Allah and His Messenger are dearer to you than anything other than them”¹ and in another hadith, “The servant does not have faith unless I become dearer to him than his property and his family and all people” and in another hadith, “and than his own self”

How can that be whereas God the Exalted has said: “Say, ‘If your fathers and your sons, your brethren’ until He says ‘more loved to you than Allah and His Messenger’?”² And this verse was revealed in a context of threatening and denial. And he

1. It is transmitted by Aḥmad in his *al-Musnad*, vol. 4, p. 11 in a hadith.

2. Al-Tawba: 24.

(Peace be upon him), has bid to love, and said: “Love God for the blessing He has bestowed upon you, and love me because of God’s love for me”¹.

It is transmitted that a man said: “O the Messenger of Allah, I love you.” He said, “Be prepared for poverty.” Then the man said: “I love Allah,” and the Prophet (s) said: “Be prepared for the test.”

‘Umar is quoted as saying: “The Prophet (Peace be upon him), saw Muṣ‘ab ibn ‘Umayr coming toward him with a sheepskin on his shoulder, fastening it in the middle around his waist. Then the Prophet (s) said: “Look at this man whose heart God has enlightened. I saw him with his parents who were giving him pure food and drink, and love of God and love of His Messenger have led him to what you are seeing.”²

In a well-known hadith [we read the following]: Indeed, Abraham (Peace be upon him), said to the Angel of Death when the latter met him to take his soul away: “Have you ever seen a friend taking a friend’s life?” Then God the Almighty the Majestic revealed to him: “Have you ever seen a lover being reluctant to meeting his beloved?” Abraham then said to the Angel of Death, “Take it now.”³ And this cannot be found except by a servant who loves God the Almighty the Majestic wholeheartedly. So when he knows that death is an occasion for meeting, his heart will develop a desire for it, and he has no beloved except Him to attend to. And our Prophet (s) has said in his supplication: “O God! Provide me with your love and the love of those who love you and the love of that which brings me close to your love, and make your love dearer to

1. This was transmitted by al-Tirmidhī, and al-Ḥākim in *al-Mustadrak*, vol. 3, p. 150 from Ibn ‘Abbās’s hadith.

2. It was transmitted by Abū Na‘īm in *al-Ḥilya* with a good chain of transmitters, as in *al-Mughnī*.

3. Al-‘Irāqī said: “I have not found a source for this.”

me than cool water.”¹

A Bedouin went to the Prophet (s) and said: “O the Messenger of Allah, when is the Hour [i.e., the resurrection]?” He said: “What have you prepared for it?” The Bedouin replied: I have not prepared a lot of prayers and fasting except that I love Allah and His Messenger.” Then the Prophet (s) said “One is with those whom one loves.” Anas said: “After Islam, I never saw Muslims being delighted by anything more than they have been delighted by hearing this.”²

One of the Prophet’s companions said: “He who has tasted the pure love of God the Almighty the Exalted will be deeply preoccupied with it so that he will not seek the world and will be horrified by all humans.” Another said: “He who knows his Lord will love Him, and he who knows this mundane world will practice asceticism in it and will hate it, and the believer does not take up diversion unless he becomes oblivious, so when he thinks of it, he feels sad”

Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī said: “Among the creatures of God the Exalted are people who are not distracted by the heavens and the blessings therein from God, so how could they be distracted from Him by this world?”

It is transmitted that Jesus (Peace be upon him), saw three people on his way whose bodies were thin and whose complexion had changed. He said to them: “What has led you to what I am witnessing? They responded: “The fear of the fire [i.e. the Hell].” Then he said: “It is incumbent upon God to give refuge to the fearer.” He went on and then saw three other people on his way

1. The hadith of ‘Abd Allāh ibn Yazīd al-Khaṭmī was mentioned with a good chain of transmission, as in *al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaghīr*.

2. It was transmitted by Muslim, vol. 8, p. 42, and by al-Ṭabarānī and al-Bazzār as in *Majma‘ al-Zawā‘id*, vol. 10, p. 280.

who were thinner and had changed even more. He said: “What has led you to what I am witnessing?” They said: “The passion for the Heaven.” He said: “It is incumbent upon God to give you what you hope for.” He left them and saw three other people. They were even thinner and had changed much more, as if bright mirrors were on their faces. He said: “What has led you to what I am witnessing?” They said: “Love of God the Almighty the Majestic.” He said: “Truly you are the nearest [to God]; you are the nearest.”

‘Abd al-Wāḥid ibn Zayd said: “I saw a man on my way who was standing amid the snow. I told him: “Do you not feel cold?” He said: “He who is occupied by God’s love does not feel cold.”

Sari al-Saqati was quoted as saying: “The nations are called on the day of resurrection with their prophets. So it will be said: ‘O the nation of Moses, and O the nation of Jesus, and O the nation of Muhammad!’ However, the lovers of God the Exalted will be called: ‘O friends of God! Haste to God the Immaculate.’ So they will be so happy that their hearts will almost leave their chests.”

Haram ibn Ḥayyān said: “When the believer knows his Lord the Almighty the Majestic, he will love Him, and when he loves Him, he will turn to Him, and when he finds the sweetness of turning to Him, he will cease to look at the world with lust and will cease to look at the afterlife with desire, and he will be in this world with his body, while his soul is in the afterlife.”

Yahyā ibn Ma‘ādh said: “His forgiveness engulfs the sins, so how will be His pleasure? And his pleasure engulfs the dreams, so how will be His love? And His love inebriates the intellects, so how will be His affection? And His affection causes the forgetfulness of anything other than Him, so how will be His grace?”

And in some books, [we read]: “O My servant! I swear to the right you have on Me that I love you, so you love me.”

Yahyā ibn Ma‘ādh said: “The weight of a mustard of love is dearer to God than seventy years of worship without love.” He

also said: “O God! I inhabit Your sanctuary, occupied with Your praise. When I was a child, You took me to Yourself and clothed me with Your proximity and honored me with Your knowledge and encompassed me with Your grace and moved me from one state to another and transformed me in actions with concealment and repentance and asceticism and longing and contentment and love. Then You saturated me from Your ponds and blessed me in Your gardens, made me adhere to Your command and delighted me with Your word until my mustache grew and my power emerged. Now that I am an adult, how can I turn away from You, while I was habituated to You since I was a child? So I should stay around you, murmuring and quietly crying, since I love You, and every lover is delighted by his beloved, turning away from everything other than his beloved.”

I say, in *Miṣbāḥ al-Sharīʿa*, al-Ṣādiq (Peace be upon him), is quoted as saying: “When love of God enlightens the heart of a servant, it will purge it of any preoccupation and any memory except God, and of all people, the lover has the purest heart for God and is the truest in word and the most committed to his covenants and the smartest in action and the purest in remembrance [of God] and has the most obedient soul. Angels take pride in him during his supplication and are proud of seeing him. And it is through him that God the Exalted builds His cities, and it is by his dignity that God dignifies His servants; He gives them when they ask Him because of him, and by God’s mercy for him, He inhibits catastrophes. So, if people knew his status before God and his place for Him, they would not seek proximity to God except by the soil of his feet.” And Amīr al- Mu’minīn (Peace be upon him), said:

Love of God burns whatever it runs into, and the
light of God enlightens whatever it shines upon,
and God’s heaven covers whatever emerges
beneath it, and God’s breeze moves whatever it

blows through, and God's water enlivens everything, and God's earth grows everything. Thus, he who loves God, God will give him everything from kingdom and property.

The Prophet (s), said:

When God loves a servant from among my nation, He will throw his love to the hearts of His pure servants and the spirits of His angels and the inhabitants of His Throne so that they truly love the lover. Happy is he and then happy is he, and he has an intercession before God on the day of resurrection. (Ibid., section 96)

These all were the words of al-Ṣādiq (a).

Abū Ḥamid said, hadiths and narratives concerning the love of God are too many to be enumerated, and this is evident; but it is difficult to capture the essence of its meaning. So now we turn to it.

Articulation of the Nature of and Reasons for Love, and Investigation of the Meaning of the Servant's Love for God the Exalted

Note that the purpose of this chapter will not be disclosed unless we know the nature of love in itself and then know about its conditions and reasons, and after this, consider its meaning when applied to God the Almighty the Majestic. Thus, the first thing worthy of being known is that love is inconceivable except after some knowledge and perception, for one does not love what one does not know, which is why it is inconceivable for an inanimate object to be characterized as loving something; this is indeed a feature of a perceiving living being. Then, perceived entities in themselves are divided into what agrees with, and is appropriate

and pleasing to, the perceiver's nature, and what disagrees with, and is inappropriate and painful to, his nature, and what does not affect the perceiver by causing pain or pleasure therein. On this account, everything the perception of which involves pleasure and solace is loved by the perceiver, and everything the perception of which involves pains is hated by the perceiver, and everything the perception of which involves no pleasure or pain is not characterized as loved or disliked. Therefore, every pleasant thing is loved by the one who enjoys it, and something's being loved means that one's nature has a desire for it, whereas something's being hated means that there is in one's nature an aversion to it. Thus, love consists in the nature's desire for something pleasing, and when the desire is intensified and strengthened, it will be called "passion" (*ishq*); hatred consists in the nature's aversion to something painful, and when it is strong, it will be called "detestation" (*maqt*). This is a principle concerning the meaning of the reality of love, which one needs to know.

The second principle is that since love follows knowledge and perception, it will perforce be divided in line with how perceptibles and senses are divided. Each sensory organ perceives a kind of perceptibles, and each is pleased by some of these perceptibles, and in virtue of this pleasure the nature develops a desire for it, which becomes loved by the normal nature. In this way, the eye's pleasure lies in vision and perception of beautiful visible things and gorgeous nice images; the ear's pleasure lies in rhythmic pleasant songs; the olfaction's pleasure is in pleasant fragrances; the gustation's pleasure is in tastes; and the tactility's pleasure is in softness and smoothness. Since these sensory perceptible things are pleasing, they are loved; that is, the normal nature develops a desire for it such that he, (Peace be upon him), said:

I was made to love from your world three
things: perfume, women, and my source of

consolation is in prayer.¹

Perfume is said to be loved, while obviously there is no joy for the eye and the ear in it; its joy belongs to the olfaction alone. And women are said to be loved, and the joy in them is just in vision and tactility, rather than olfaction, taste, and audition. And prayer is said to be a source of consolation and is rendered the top of all these loved things, while obviously the five senses have no joy in it—it is just enjoyed by a sixth sense whose vehicle is the heart and is not perceived except by one who has a heart.

The pleasures of the five senses are shared by livestock and humans. Thus, if love is limited to the perceptibles of the five senses so that it is said that God the Exalted is not perceived by the senses and is not represented in the imagination, and therefore, He is not loved, then the peculiarity and distinction of the human being will dissipate; that is, the sixth sense referred to as “reason” or “light” or “heart” or whatever expression you would prefer—there is no dispute over this. This is far-fetched, however, since the inner vision is stronger than the outer vision, and the heart is more keenly perceptive than the eye, and the beauty of the meanings perceived by reason is greater than the beauty of the outer images for the vision. Therefore, the hearts’ pleasure from what they perceive—noble divine things which are too exalted to be perceived by the senses—is more perfect and higher. On this account, the desire of the sound nature and the healthy reason for it will be stronger, and love means nothing but the desire for the thing the perception of which involves a pleasure, as will be elaborated shortly. Therefore, no one denies the love of God the Exalted except someone who is as low in his degree as livestock in that he has never transcended the perception of the senses.

The third principle is that obviously the human being loves

1. It was frequently cited before.

himself and obviously he loves others for his own sake. Is it conceivable for someone to love someone else for that person's sake, rather than his own sake? This seems difficult to the impoverished such that they think it is inconceivable for one to love others for their own sake unless a joy is accrued from it by the lover—a joy other than the perception of them. The truth, however, is that this is conceivable and actually existing. Let us elaborate the kinds and reasons of love.

To illustrate, the primary beloved for every living being is his own self and essence, and his love for himself amounts to saying that there is in his nature a desire for the persistence of his own existence and an aversion to his nonexistence and destruction; for the loved thing is by nature that which agrees with the lover, and what is more agreeable to one than one's own self and the persistence of his existence? And what is more disagreeable and disliked to him than his nonexistence and destruction? This is why, the human being loves persistence of his existence and dislikes death and murder, not merely because the fear he has for what happens after death, nor merely because of the apprehension of the throes of death, but if he is abducted [from this world] without a pain and fatigue, and is caused to die without a reward or punishment, he will not be content with it and will dislike it. One does not love death and pure nonexistence except because of suffering a pain in life, and whenever he suffers from a catastrophe, he loves the elimination of the catastrophe. Thus, if he loves nonexistence, he does not love it because it is nonexistence, but because it involves the elimination of the catastrophe.

On this account, destruction and nonexistence are detested, and the persistence of existence is loved, and just as the persistence of existence is loved, the perfection of existence is also loved, since the imperfect lacks perfection, and imperfection is a nonbeing relative to the missing value, and it counts as a destruction in relation to it. Moreover, destruction and nonexistence are detested in attributes

and the perfection of existence, as they are detested in the essence itself; and the existence of perfective attributes is loved, as is the persistence of existence itself. This is an impulse inside nature by virtue of the precedent set by God the Exalted: “[A]nd you will never find a change in the precedent of Allah.” (Al-Fath: 23)

Therefore, the primary beloved of the human is his essence, then the health of his body parts, then his property, children, kin, and friends. The body parts are loved and their health is desirable, because the perfection and persistence of existence depend on it; and property is loved, because it is instrumental to the persistence and perfection of existence as well. The same is true of other reasons; the human loves these things, not because of themselves, but because of the relation between them and his benefit from the persistence and perfection of existence such that one loves his child, even if no benefit is accrued from the child and even if hardship is tolerated for his sake, because the child will replace him in existence after his nonexistence; hence, he will survive in a way by virtue of the survival of his offspring. Thus, because of his love for his own survival, he loves the survival of someone who will replace him, and it is as if the child is part of him, because of his failure to aspire his own survival forever. Of course, if he is given an option between his own murder and the murder of his child, and his nature remains moderate, he will prefer his own survival to his child's, because his child's survival resembles his own survival in one respect, but it is not his actual survival. The same is true of his love for his kin and family—it traces back to his love of his own perfection; for he sees himself strong and powerful because of them, being ornamented by their perfection. Indeed, the family, property, and external reasons are one's complementary wings, and the perfection and persistence of existence are perforce loved by nature; therefore, the primary beloved for every living being is his own essence and its perfection as well as the persistence of this all; and what is disliked is the opposite of this. This is the first reason.

The second reason is beneficence [or good-doing] (*iḥsān*)—the

human is the servant of beneficence. Hearts are innately made to love those who have done good to them and hate those who have wronged them. The Messenger of God (s) said: “O God! Do not let any wrongdoer do good to me lest my heart should love him!”¹ This is a reference to the fact that the heart’s love for the beneficent is compulsive such that one cannot prevent it. This is an innate, native nature, which can by no means be changed. This is why one sometimes loves a stranger whereas there is no closeness or relation involved. When this happens, this will refer to the first reason, since the beneficent is one who helps by giving properties, aids, and other reasons contributing to the persistence of existence and perfection of existence, as well as the acquisition of the benefits with which existence is facilitated. There is, nevertheless, a difference between the two: one’s body parts are loved because the perfection of his existence depends on them, and they are identical to the desired perfection, whereas a beneficent person is not identical to the desired perfection but may as well be its cause, such as a physician who causes the persistence of the health of one’s body parts. There is, therefore, a difference between the love for health and the love for the physician, who serves as a cause of health, since health is desired for its own sake, and the physician is loved not for his own sake, but because he is the cause of health. The same is the case with knowledge and the teacher, as both are loved, but knowledge is loved for its own sake and the teacher is loved for his causation of the loved knowledge. Similarly, food and drinks are loved, and dinars are loved, but food is loved for its own sake, and dinars are loved because they serve as means for the food.

In this way, the difference goes back to the difference in rank—regardless of this difference, each of these traces back to one’s love

1. Transmitted by Abū Maṣṣūr al-Daylamī in *Musnad al-Firdaws* from Ma‘ādh’s hadith, which was cited before.

for his own self. Thus, every person who loves a beneficent person because of his beneficence does not love the beneficent person himself, properly speaking; rather, he loves his beneficence, which is an action of his, and if this action no longer exists, the love will also cease to exist, although the beneficent person himself will properly speaking continue to exist. Moreover, if the action is diminished, the love will also diminish, and if it increases, the love will also increase. It is susceptible of increase and decrease in terms of the increase and decrease of beneficence.

The third reason is to love something for its own sake, not because of a benefit that accrues from it other than its own essence. Indeed, its essence is its benefit. This is the mature truthful love whose persistence is certain, such as the love for beauty and goodness; for every beauty is loved by its perceiver because of beauty itself, since perception of beauty involves pleasure itself, and pleasure is loved. One should not think that the love for beautiful images cannot be conceived except for the sake of satisfying one's lust, since the satisfaction of one's lust is another pleasure for the sake of which beautiful images are loved. Perception of beauty itself is also pleasurable, so it might be loved for its own sake. How would this be denied while grass and the stream of water are loved, not for the sake of drinking water or eating grass or for the sake of another benefit beyond seeing them? The Messenger of God (s) liked the grass and the stream of water.¹

The sound natures judge that it is pleasurable to see blossoms, flowers, and nicely colored, well-patterned, harmoniously shaped birds such that one's sadness is resolved by seeing them, not because of seeking a benefit beyond seeing them. These reasons are pleasing, and every pleasing thing is loved, and every goodness and beauty is

1. Transmitted by Abū Na'īm in his book, *Ṭibb al-Nabiyy Ṣalla Allāh 'alayh wa Ālih* (The Prophet's Medicine Peace be upon Him and His Family) from Ibn 'Abbās's hadith through a weak chain of transmission, as in *al-Mughnī*.

such that its perception necessarily involves a pleasure. No one will deny that beauty is loved by nature. Thus, if it is established that God the Exalted is beautiful, He will inevitably be loved by anyone to whom His beauty and majesty are disclosed, just as the Messenger of God (s) said: “Verily, God is beautiful and loves beauty.”¹

The fourth reason concerning the meaning of goodness and beauty: Beware that a person who is confined to the enclosure of imaginations and the sensible may as well think that goodness and beauty are nothing but harmony in creation and shape, goodness of color, where white is mixed with redness, and stature being tall, among other attributes of the beauty of a human person. Since the dominant sense in people is vision, and they tend to attend to forms of individuals, they think that if something is not visible, imagined, shaped, colored, or measured, its beauty cannot be conceived, and when its beauty is inconceivable, perceiving it will not involve pleasure, so it will fail to be loved.

This is, however, a blatant mistake, since goodness is not restricted to what is visually perceived, nor to harmonious creation and the mixture of whiteness with redness. Thus, we say, this is a beautiful handwriting and this is a beautiful voice, and we even say, this shirt is pretty and this is a pretty container. So, what does it mean for a voice, handwriting, or other things to be beautiful if beauty is restricted to the form? It is obvious that the eye enjoys looking at beautiful handwriting, and the ear enjoys listening to good, pleasant songs. And everything that is perceived can be divided into beautiful and ugly. So, what is the meaning of the beauty shared by all these objects? We need to inquire into

1. Transmitted by al-Bayhaqī in *Shu‘ab al-Īmān* (Branches of the Faith), from Abū Sa‘īd al-Khidrī’s hadith through a weak chain of transmission, and Muslim and al-Tirmidhī through Ibn Mas‘ūd’s hadith, and al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Kabīr* from Abū Umāma’s hadith, and Ibn ‘Asākir from Jābir’s and Ibn ‘Umar’s hadith through a reliable chain of transmission, as in *al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaghīr*.

this, and this is a lengthy inquiry, but prolixity is not right in the science of transaction. For this reason, we explicitly state the truth and say that the beauty and goodness of everything lies in the existence of the possible perfection it deserves. When all of its possible perfections are instantiated, it will be of the utmost beauty, which is the utmost perfection, and if some of these exist, it will have beauty and goodness to the extent of what exists. Thus, a beautiful horse is that which has everything that is deserved by a horse, such as disposition, shape, color, racing well, and capability of running and escaping. Beautiful handwriting is what has all that is deserved by handwriting, such as the harmony of the letters and their balance, having a straight order, and having a good organization. Everything has a perfection it deserves, and sometimes other things deserve the opposite of that perfection. Thus, the beauty of anything lies in the perfection it deserves; what is good in a horse is not good in a human being, what is good in voice is not good in handwriting, what is good in shirts is not good in containers, and the same is true of other things.

Objection: even if all these things are not perceived by vision, such as sounds, tastes, and smells, they are still perceived by the senses, in which case they count as sensible things, and goodness and beauty are not denied in the case of the sensible and it is not denied that the perception of their beauty involves pleasure. This is only denied in the case of things not perceived via the senses.

Reply: note that goodness and beauty exist in non-sensible things as well, since it is said that this is a good moral temperament, this is a good piece of knowledge, and this is a good tradition; there are beautiful morals, where “beautiful morals” refer to knowledge, reason, chastity, courage, piety, generosity, manliness (*muruwwa*), and other good characteristics. And none of these attributes are perceived by the five senses; instead, they are perceived in light of the inner insight, and all of these beautiful characteristics are loved, and one who has these attributes is loved by nature by

anyone who knows his attributes. Evidence for this is that people's natures are created so that they love prophets, God's blessings be upon them, although they have never seen them. Moreover, their natures are created so that they love the leaders of religions such that one's love for the leader of his religion might go beyond the boundary of passion such that he may donate all his property for the victory and defense of his religion and risk his life fighting those who slander his Imam and leader. Much blood is shed for helping the religious leader. I wish I knew why someone loves his Imam, for instance, while he has never seen his face? If he saw him, he would perhaps like his appearance as well, but the fondness construed as the excess of love is just because of the Imam's inner practice, not his outer form, for his outer form has turned into soil. He just loves him because of his inner attributes, such as religion, piety, vastness of knowledge, mastery of religious evidence, his attempts at promulgating the knowledge of religious rulings, and his distribution of good in the world.

These are beautiful things whose beauty is not perceived except by the light of insight, and the senses fail to perceive them. All those inner attributes go back to knowledge and power when one knows the truths of everything and is able to control his lusts. All good characteristics are, thus, ancillaries of these two attributes, and these are not perceived by the sense. Indeed, their locus in the body is an indivisible part, which is the really loved thing. Since the indivisible part has no form or shape or color that appears to the vision, it cannot be loved because of this. Therefore, beauty is found in practices, and if beautiful practice does not arise from knowledge and insight, it will not initiate love. Thus, the loved one is the source of beautiful practice; that is, laudable moral characteristics and noble virtues, all of which go back to the perfection of knowledge and power, which is loved by nature and is not perceived by the senses. Indeed, if we want a child who is left to his nature to love an absent or present, living or dead person, we have no way but to go to great lengths in describing his courage, generosity,

knowledge, and other laudable characteristics. Whenever the child believes in these, he cannot help loving that person. Is it not the case that the love for the companions [of the Prophet] and the hatred for Abū Jahl and Iblis, may God curse him, have arisen from detailed descriptions of their respective goodness and badness, which cannot be perceived by the senses? Since people describe Ḥātām as generous and a man as brave, their hearts will perforce love them, which is not in virtue of having seen their sensible forms or a benefit accrued from them by the lover. Instead, whenever the practice of a monarch in some corner of the Earth is narrated to the effect that he practices justice and beneficence, and promotes good, his love will dominate the hearts even if there is no hope that his beneficence extends to his lovers because of the distance between their lands. One's love is not, therefore, limited to someone who has extended his beneficence to him; a beneficent person is loved in himself, even if his beneficence never extends to the lover, because every beauty or goodness is loved.

There are two kinds of forms: outer and inner, where goodness and beauty include both. Outer forms are perceived by exterior vision, and inner forms are perceived by interior vision. If one is deprived of interior vision, he will not perceive, enjoy, love, or desire the inner form, and if one's interior vision is more dominant than his exterior vision, he will love inner meanings more than he loves outer meanings. There is, thus, a world of difference between someone who loves an image portrayed on a wall because of the beauty of its outer form and someone who loves a prophet because of the beauty of his inner form.

The fifth reason: a hidden association between the lover and the loved, since there might be two persons the love between whom intensifies not because of beauty or a benefit, but merely because of an association in their souls, as the Prophet (s) said:

Spirits are troops divided in regiments—those who were acquainted with one another are united, and

those who were not, are disunited.”¹

We have investigated this in the book on the Manners of Companionship when talking about the love of God the Exalted — please consult this book, since this is also an eccentric reason for love.

On this account, all kinds of love go back to five: one’s love for his own existence and his perfection and survival; one’s love for a person who does good to him as far as it goes back to the persistence of his existence and helps his survival and prevents harms; his love for someone who is in himself beneficent to people, even if he is not beneficent to him; his love for everything that is beautiful in itself, regardless of whether it is an outer form or an inner form; and his love for someone because of a hidden association between them in their interior [feeling]. If all these reasons are found in one person, love will perforce intensify, such as when one has a child whose face is beautiful and whose moral character is good with perfect knowledge, and prudence, in addition to his doing good to people and to the parent—in this case, he will inevitably be loved to the utmost. The strength of love after the presence of all these characteristics is in virtue of the strength of these characteristics themselves. If these characteristics exist to the highest degree of perfection, the love will perforce be to the highest degree. Let us now explicate that all of these reasons cannot conceivably exist at once in their perfect form except in the case of God. Thus, no one deserves love in reality except God the Exalted the Immaculate.

1. It was transmitted by Muslim in his *Sahih*, vol. 8, p. 41. It was previously cited.