

The Discussions of Love, Determinism, and Providence in Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and al-Kirmani

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Abstract : This paper addresses the subject of love in two of the most prominent Islamic philosophers: Ibn Sīnā (known in the Latin World as Avicenna d. 1037) Avicenna and al-Kirmānī (DC 1021). By surveying the connection that the concept of love entertains with the notions of divine providence and determinism in the luminaries' theoretical systems, the present paper highlights differences and similarities in their respective approaches to the subjects. Through a thorough analysis of primary and secondary literature, it will be shown that Avicenna's thought, which is mainly informed by the Aristotelian and Farābīan metaphysical and cosmological stances, is also integrated with mystical underpinnings. Particularly, in Avicenna's *Risāla fī'l-ʿishq* love becomes the expression of the divine providence which operates through the intellectual striving the souls undertake in their desire to return to their First Cause. Love is also portrayed as an instrument helping the divine decree to remain unadulterated by way of keeping existing beings within their species and genera as well as an instrument which is employed by God to know and be known. This paper also discusses that if on the one hand, al-Kirmānī speaks of love as the Aristotelian and Farābīan motive-force spurring existents to achieve perfection and as a tool which facilitates the status quo of divine creation, on the other hand, he remains steadily positioned within Ismāʿīlī and Neoplatonic paradigms: the return of all loving-beings to their Source is interrupted at the level of the first Intellect, whilst God remains inaccessible and ineffable. By investigating his opus magnum, the *Rāḥat al-ʿaql*, we shall highlight how al-Kirmānī also emphasizes the notion of divine providence which allows humans to attain their ultimate completeness by following the teachings of the Imams, repositories of the knowledge necessary to serve the unreachable deity.

Keywords : Avicenna, determinism, love, al-Kirmani, Ismaili philosophy

Conference Title : ICAIS 2016 : International Conference on Arabic and Islamic Studies

Conference Location : Venice, Italy

Conference Dates : June 13-14, 2016