

**A Comparative Reading of George Herbert's  
and Rumi's Epistemology of Divine Love**

**Dr. Alireza Anushiravani\***

**Fahima Nasseri\*\***

**Abstract**

This paper is a comparative discussion of the epistemology of Divine Love in the poetical works of two mystics: Rumi and George Herbert. These two poets, who respectively come from the Islamic and Western traditions, neither share the same culture nor the same time, yet their concept of divine love is very similar. A comparative study of this concept in Rumi's *Mathnawi* and *Divan* and Herbert's *The Temple* will reveal the universality of Divine Love. The paper starts with the definitions of divine love through briefly examining the philosophical background of the theme of love in the Western and Islamic traditions, and will, then, proceed with the analysis of the poetical works of the two poets. The main reason for this amazing similarity lies in the nature of this experience, the love for the Absolute, which all men have felt in all times and places regardless of their national and cultural heritage.

**Key Words:** 1- Love 2- Divine Love 3- Rumi 4- George Herbert 5- Plato 6- Epistemology of Love 7- Platonic Love 8. Comparative Mysticism

**1. Introduction**

The theme of love is as old as man himself, or probably older, even before man walked the earth; indeed, before the earth and universe were even created. Thus, the entirety of creation is linked through love. The theme of love, in different forms and shapes, has

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\* Assistant Professor of Shiraz University

\*\* Instructor of Persian Gulf University

found its way through philosophical and literary expressions of all nations and cultures, in all places and all times.

Though the two poets Rumi (1207-1273) and George Herbert (1593-1633) come from different cultural, religious, historical, and social backgrounds, they both express their unspeakable experience of love for the Absolute Reality. The main reason for this amazing similarity lies in the nature of the experience.

The present paper starts with a short comparative discussion of the nature of love in the Western and Islamic philosophical traditions, and will then, examine the different aspects of Divine Love in Rumi's and Herbert's poetry.

## **2. Philosophical Conceptualizations of the Nature of Love**

### **2.1. Western Heritage**

In the Western world, Plato's writings (mainly *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*) construct the most influential traditions of love. In the *Symposium*, Plato discusses his concept of love through his characters, — namely Phaedrus, Pausanias, Eryximachus, Aristophanes, Agathon, Diotima and Socrates. For Phaedrus love ennobles both the lover and the beloved and is the most powerful drive in man's life. "And to die for another — this only lovers are willing to do, not only men, but women" (18, p: 817). Pausanias dualistic vision of love distinguishes between two kinds of love: sacred and profane, or "common" and "heavenly". The "common" love is based on sensuality and the "heavenly" love produces virtues. "True Love, then, which belongs to Common Aphrodite is really and truly common and works at random; and this is the love which inferior men feel. Such persons love firstly women as well as boys; next, when they love, they love bodies rather than souls; and next, they choose the most foolish persons they can, for they look only to getting something done, and care nothing whether well or not" (Ibid, p: 818). "This is the love of heavenly goddess, love both heavenly and precious to city and men: for it compels both lover and beloved to take all possible care for virtue" (Ibid, p: 821). Eryximachus thinks of love as music which brings harmony, mental balance and peace of mind. "Just so rhythm is made from quick and slow, first differing, then brought into agreement. But music places agreement here in all these, just as there the art of

healing does, by implanting concord and love for each other; and music again is the knowledge of love affairs concerning harmony and rhythm (Ibid, p:823). Aristophanes, the great Greek playwright, defines love in terms of search for wholeness and completion. "So you see how ancient is the mutual love implanted in mankind, bringing together the parts of the original body, and trying to make one out of two, and to heal the natural structure of man. (Ibid, p: 826). Agathon refers to an essential point in the Platonic philosophy of love, i.e., love is the only creative force in the universe. "Hence you see also, all that business of the gods was arranged when Love came among them – love of beauty, that is plain, for there is no Love in ugliness. Before that, as I said at the beginning, many terrible things happened to the gods because of the reign of Necessity – so the story goes; but when this god Love was born; all became good both for gods and men from loving beautiful things" (Ibid, p: 830). And finally Diotima explains love to Socrates by putting all the arguments together. Indeed, she demonstrates that though they have been talking about forms of love, true love is the love of Beauty or Goodness. Man searches permanent goodness and beauty, the essence of which never changes. For Plato love is a desire for perpetual possession of the good. "But one must desire immortality along with the good, according to what has been agreed, if love is love of having the good for oneself always. It is necessary then from this argument that love is for immortality" (Ibid, p: 838). In the *Symposium*, Plato leads the reader progressively from lower forms of love to higher ones. The greatest love, according to Plato, is the Love of Absolute Beauty, which is, in other words, Divine Love. Therefore, love becomes a process through which man tries to join his divine origin from which he has been separated.

For let me tell you, the right way to approach the things of Love, or to be led there by another, is this: beginning from these beautiful things, to mount for that beauty's sake ever upwards, as by a flight of steps, from one to two, and from two to all beautiful bodies, and from beautiful bodies to beautiful pursuits and practices, and from practices to beautiful learnings, so that from learnings he may come at last to that perfect learning which is the learning solely of that beauty itself, and may know at last that which is the perfection of beauty. ... "What indeed," she said, "should we think, if it were

given to one of us to see beauty undefiled, pure, unmixed, not adulterated with human flesh and colors and much other mortal rubbish, and if he could behold beauty in perfect?" (Ibid, p: 841).

Plotinus (204-270 C.E.), Plato's disciple who lived in Alexandria, the meeting place of Hellenic and Islamic philosophy, talks extensively about love in the *Enneads*. He emphasizes man's ultimate need for true love. "The universal drama of man is integrally present and nobly solved in the writings of Plotinus. This drama, in every system, is invariably constructed around two questions: do we love? Whom do we love? The peace and the tragedy of man depend on his capacity for love and the object of his love. All the secondary problems, to which the continuous text of Plotinus gives a soothing and unified answer, derive from these two pre-eminent questions. His lessons on the beautiful and on the mystical life are closely mingled because God is supreme beauty and above all corporeal and sensible beauty. The appearances of the beautiful, perceived by the senses, represent a fictional beauty incapable of satisfying us. The reality of the beautiful is purely spiritual, invisible as ideas, and absolute as the reality of love which is God" (8, p: 17-18).

## **2.2. Islamic Heritage**

In his *Risalat-ol Ishq (A Treatise on Love)*, Avicenna (980-1037) explains how love runs through the whole universe including the non-animates, plants and animals, and finally human beings. The human love manifests itself either as the love of the exterior (*zahir*) or the love of the interior (*batin*). Whatever God has created has an ultimate goal and moves towards perfection. God is the ultimate Beloved of all because he is the most perfect of all. Love is, in fact, one of the attributes of God (28, p: 21).

Shihabuddin Yaha Suhrawardi's (1170-1208) elaboration of the same theme is very similar to that of Avicenna. He particularly expands this idea in his famous treatise *Monis-ol Oshshaq* or *Fi Haqiqatol Ishq (The Companion of Lovers or On the Truth of Love)*. In this treatise he talks about the love of beauty in a neo-Platonic way. "The beauty that we perceive by our senses in the phenomenal world is not the true beauty (*hosn*), but only a manifestation of it. In fact, all the beauties of this world are only a reflection of a more sublime truth which cannot be comprehended by our senses, and has a metaphysical nature (27, p: 180).

Ahmad Ghazzali (937-999) also discusses the nature of love extensively in his *Savaneh*. From his point of view, this world is the created and God is the creator. Therefore, this world is an artistic creation, the creation of an artist. This artist is no one except God. Hence, the relationship between this world and God is similar to the relationship between the artistic work and its artist. The artist leaves a sign of identity on his work, i.e., his signature or seal. God has also left his sign on his creation and that sign is beauty. Therefore, all the beauties of this world should lead man to its creator (Ibid, p: 181).

### **3. Western and Islamic philosophical common grounds about the Divine Love**

A comparative overview of the Western and Islamic philosophy demonstrates their common ground regarding the nature of true love. In both traditions love is a return, or voyage, to one's origin. And one's origin resides in God who is the sole creator of beauty in the world. Every beautiful existence in the world is just a contemplation upon his Absolute Beauty. St. Augustine believes that "every created thing has its specific kind of love in that it loves according to its proper nature, and is impelled by that love to seek its own place" (21, p: 61). This reminds one of Hafiz (d.1271), when he says in his *Divan*:

(O true beloved!) in eternity without beginning (the day of misak), of glory, the splendour-ray of Thy beauty boasted.

Revealed became love; and, upon all the world, fire dashed (10, p:106).

Kakaie's explanation of Ibnol 'Arabi's theory of *Wahdat-ul Wujud* (Unity of Existence) is helpful in appreciating this common ground. "This theory was not only an approach to understanding the universe, but also a specific reading of religious texts regarding God and His attributes and a conceptual interpretation of mystical intuition" (33, p: 56). According to this theory there is only one truth in the whole existence and that is God, the Absolute Reality, which has taken different names in different religions. In other

words, Ibn-ol 'Arabi is talking about multiplicity within unity where every manifestation refers to the Only One. "In many instances, (*Al-Futuhāt*, vol. 1, p.475, 1.21) he considered the existence of the universe identical with the very existence of God. The highest degree of Monotheism is when the existence of the universe is exactly identical with the existence of God, the Absolute Truth, and nothing else. And if there were no restrictions, one could not make any distinction between them (*Al-Futuhāt*, vol. 4, p.146, 1. 16). One whom God has given insight sees only Him in everything, or sees Him as the very existence of everything (*Al-Futuhāt*, vol. 3, p.247 ). Mystics consider him the thing itself (*Al-Futuhāt*, vol. 4, p.28, also vol.3, p. 386)" (qtd. in 33, p: 58).

However, some might simply fall in love with the shadow of beauty or its appearance. Both traditions agree on the concept that love is essentially a desire to return to one's origin, for union with the Absolute Beloved. However, only selected people are capable of perceiving and embracing His Love and move upward in the ladder of love.

#### 4. Rumi's Concept of Divine Love

Rumi, the Persian poet and thinker, is the greatest mystic the world of Islam has ever produced. His ideas regarding the nature of Divine love are best reflected in his poetry. The musicality, the harmony, and the language of his poetry show the extent of the absorption of his soul in the Divine. Love as viewed by Rumi is a movement toward perfection, the creative force in the universe, and the linking power of the whole existence as well as the residence of the creature in the creator. It involves knowledge and a willing endeavor to purge oneself from impurities as well as the total submission of one's will to His will. By actualizing His traits within oneself, man can ultimately feel His presence within himself and achieve perfection through love.

Except love of the most beautiful God everything, though  
(outwardly) it is (pleasant like) eating sugar, is (in truth)  
agony of spirit. (14, *Mathnawī*, I, 1. 3686)

Those loves which are for the sake of color (outward beauty)  
are not love:  
in the end they are a disgrace. (*Mathnawī*, I, 1. 205)

However, Chittick thinks that even in loving a worldly creature, one is



loving God. He has, in fact, divided love into two kinds: 1. true love or love for God, and 2. derivative love or love for anything else (5, p: 201). But, on closer examination, one sees that all love are, in fact love for God; since whatever exists is His reflection. Chittick thinks that the difference between the two kinds of love is that some people know that only God truly exists and direct their love only toward Him while others believe in the independent existence of various objects of desire and so turn their love toward them (Ibid, p: 203). But, in fact, love for other than God derives from love for Him. Rumi says. "In the eyes of the elect, love is a tremendous eternal light, even though the vulgar see it as but form and sensuality" (15, *Divan*, l. 1897). In *Fih-e-ma-Fih* Rumi says, "in reality that which attracts is a single thing, but it appears multiple (16, p:19). In *Mathnawi*, he says:

When you go to a friend's form, you go for the sake of your  
companionship with him.  
Hence, in meaning you have gone to a formless, even if you  
are unaware of your goal.  
So, in reality God is worshipped by all things, for they all  
travel their paths in search of joy.  
But, some have turned their faces toward the tail, the head is  
the root, but they have lost it. (VI, ll. 3753-56)

Zarrinkub also believes that to Rumi human and Divine love are the same (29, p: 253), in the sense that human love should be a practice for loving God. That is why his love of nature and his being in accordance with the whole universe is a reflection of his mystical way of thinking. What he says in *Ghazallyat* is the outburst of his soul, and the words of the Beloved. Even in his other masterpiece, *Mathnawi*, which literally means the song of Divine love (31, p:21) he talks about nothing but love in the form of stories. "The king and the maid" in Book I, "Moses and the Shepherds" in book II "the life of Sadr-e-Jahan" in Book III and IV, "The story of Mahmood and Ayaz" in Book V, and "Leili and Majnoon" in the sixth Book provide only a few examples of Rumi's concept of Divine love.

#### **4.1. Love as the Ultimate Force in the Universe**

According to Ibn-ol 'Arabi the universe was created through God's love. God was a hidden treasure unknown to everyone and loved to be known; therefore, He created man (6, p: 9). Thus, God's love to be known was the motivating force behind His creation of the universe. In other words, love is the *raison d'être* of the whole existence. All movements and activities in the universe originate from that primal love, and every

phenomenon on earth is nothing but a reflection of his unique reality. Having been influenced by Ibn-ol-'Arabi. Rumi thinks of love as a creative power which pervades all beings and is "... equal to Divine Essence" (5, p: 146). Man's potentialities for growth and development become active only through the actualization of the traits of God in man, that is, through the crystallization of God's attribute latent within man. One of the most important of all divine attributes is love, and when one says that God is love, he is actually identifying God with one of His attributes, i.e., power, will, and knowledge.

#### **4.2. Knowledge as the Source of Love**

Love is produced by knowledge and is closely related to mercy (6, p: 8). In this sense before loving God one has to know Him since one cannot love anything without first having knowledge of it. Yet, to know God, one has to know himself first as one of His manifestations. However, this type of knowledge is achieved by the heart which is "the ultimate center of man's consciousness, his inmost reality, and his meaning as known by God" (5, p: 37). This knowledge comes to the heart only if the wayfarer (*Salik*) purges himself and takes off the rust, which has covered the mirror of his heart. This will let the Divine Light enter his heart and lead him towards the source of that light. Rumi says,

Return to yourself, oh heart! for from the heart/ a hidden  
road can be found to the Beloved/ If the road of the six  
directions has no door, /then come to the heart, you can  
make a door, come into the heart, the place of  
contemplating God:/ Though it is not so now! It can be made  
so. (*Divan*, ll. 6885-87)

or

In the lane of love a shout rose up /A window has opened up  
in the house/ the heart! What is this talk of windows? /  
For the new Sun has arisen!/ Not even a needle's breath  
of shadow remains" (*Divan*, ll. 2085-86).

In Ibn-ol 'Arabi's writings, gaining such a knowledge is referred to as "opening or *Futuh*" (7, p: xii). It is further referred to as unveiling, tasting, and witnessing divine effusion, divine self-disclosure, and insight. All these terms designate a mode of gaining direct knowledge of God without the intermediary of study or rational faculty. It comes to the aspirant suddenly after he had been patiently knocking at the door. This type of knowledge leads one to the love for God and again to a higher knowledge of Him, which once more is led to a more supreme love for God. This involves neither self-exertion nor



raising up the gaze nor seeking after that particular knowledge since it enters the heart by the Divine will. It tells us that God may bestow knowledge upon His servant if he wills. Ibn-ol 'Arabi quotes the Qur'anic verse, "Be God fearing and God will teach you" (2, 282). This God fearingness which prepares the disciple for God's teaching entails his complete absorption in putting the Divine law into practice. But this God fearingness is the least of the necessary qualifications. Chittick believes it is "an attribute which Muslims have always perceived as the epitome of human perfection" (7, p: xiii). Opening up one's heart to the unseen world largely depends upon the individual human nature.

Everyone, according to the measure of his spiritual enlightenment, sees the things unseen in proportion to the polishing (of his heart's mirror). The more he polishes, the more he sees and the more visible does the form (of things unseen) become to him (*Mathnawi*. IV, ll. 2909-10).

This type of knowledge is the basis for the knowledge of the Absolute Reality. Ibn-ol 'Arabi calls it "imaginal or mundus imaginal" (32, p: 174). It is shared in all religious traditions. Chittick believes,

This mundus imaginal is the realm where invisible and corporeal things are spiritualized; it has an independent ontological status and must be clearly differentiated from the imaginary world, which is no more than our individual fantasies. It is the center of God's infusion of knowledge led to love (7, p: i).

In this respect, man is the most complete creature who by receiving God's opening, worships God. He is the epitome and the best manifestation of God's attributes. According to Jahangiri it is through him and because of him that God's mercy dominates the world (32, p: 327).

#### **4.3. The Itinerary of Love**

The path of love usually begins with man's falling in love with an earthly beloved. But being a partial manifestation of God, man cannot hold the love of another worldly creature that is equal to him

in the hierarchy of existence. As the vicegerent of God on earth, man has the potentiality to go higher. “[T]he sincere lover is he who passes into the attributes of the beloved, not pulling down the beloved to his own” (6, p: 11). Yet, the union with God is not easily accessible. Having a dynamic quality, the journey entails wonder, quest, loss, death and rebirth in the hope of reunion with the Beloved.

#### **4.4. Purgation of the Self**

Through controlling his carnal soul, the *nafs*, and purifying his heart, man reaches the stage of *Fana* (annihilation) when “... [the] consciousness of the phenomenal world is lost” (12, p: 54). This does not necessarily mean the dying of the self; it is rather the awareness of the essential oneness of the whole existence (*Wahdat-ul Wujud*). The path of love involves annihilation of the self, purgation of vices, knowledge of the Divine, submission of one’s will to His will, and the actualization of His attributes within oneself. Man’s essence is divinely rooted and a gift bestowed upon him by the Almighty. It is only a deposit, which he has to return to its real owner. In return for his mercy, he has to return to God what has been given to him, that is, his pure and innocent self. God’s mercy has presented man His love by which his soul can ascend to such a place where only angels dare to fly.

#### **4.5. Annihilation of the Self (*Fana*)**

In order to be worthy of the love of God, a persistent seeker has to break away from any attachments, while directing his love continually toward the new object of desire. It is through struggling with the unconscious undesirable forces that man achieves perfection, which constitutes the passing away of “I”. It is, in fact, a movement from “I”ness to oneness or self-enrichment through a series of negations and assertions. As Rumi says, “the lover should be absorbed in the Beloved in a way that all his senses and organs become absorbed in Him and none of those diverse from the main way. Each organ has to feel in itself a kind of totality and becoming the SELF, he tries no more and moves no more [total submission to God’s will...]” (16, p: 42).

When the torrent reached the sea, it became the sea;  
When the seed reached the cornland, it became the crop  
of corn.

(*Mathnawi*, I, l. 1531)

This union or final integration refers to a state where "... id, ego and super ego all merge into one force, directing itself toward unification with an object of desire" (1, p: xvi). Internally it results in happiness and complete awareness of being only the truth. In this sense it is not mere submission rather, it is almost gaining *baqa* or subsistence, that is, individuality in non-individuality. At this stage man becomes perfect and gains rebirth to a more mature self. Rumi says, "I am not Shams of Tabriz. I am pure light. Be aware if you see me; don't tell anyone that you have seen me" (1, p: 88).

#### **4.6. Man's Return to His Origin**

Such a task cannot be accomplished by reason; it is rather through the illumination of one's heart that man realizes his origin and tries to return to it. The motif behind it is that man's existence has been given to him as a deposit by the Absolute Good due to His mercy and his return to Him as his origin is part of the Divine plan. Yet, in return for His mercy one has to return his existence which is part of His, as it was, pure and innocent; otherwise, he has corrupted His Being (30, p: 41). To do so man has to be equipped with love, the only positive force in the world (19, p: 334). This emphasis on the return to one's origin has its roots in the Qur'an. God says, "Thou purged self, return to your Nourisher"(89: 28). Elsewhere He says, "one who hopes to return to his God and does not worship other gods will be saved (18: 11). By accepting the "Trust", that is, man's special position and function in creation (5, p: 63) man's spirit was given a body in this world. Having entered into this world, the spirit forgot its original home and its covenant with God. But through purgation, man's spirit can pass beyond the veils of his ego and rejoin his original state of purity. Indeed, as Sharif thinks, in Rumi's metaphysics the original state from which the ego fell was not the traditional paradise, but the unitary ground of Divinity. The fall is concerned not only with man or the disobedience of Adam and Eve; rather it is a universal cosmic phenomenon (20, p: 828). Hence, the inevitable return of the whole universe to its original state.

#### **4.7. Union with the Divine**

Love grows upon the image of the beloved until man turns all his attention toward the beloved who totally occupies his imagination and thoughts. As a result he will be taken upward step by step through alternating states of expansion and contraction until finally

his imagination can no longer be distinguished from the reality outside and beyond himself (5, p: 256).

You stop at every form that you come to saying. "I am this."

By God, you are not that (form) (*Mathnawi*, IV, l. 804).

At the stage of *Baqa*, man finds himself above heart, reason, and soul. He enters a state of conscious existence where no sign remains, "once more I rose above the heart, reason and soul; the Beloved appeared in my midst; we rose above the midst / we turned from *fana* [the removal of 'I', a state of partial integration and quickly entered *baqa* [a state of total integration] / we searched the signless and rose above the symbol. (1, p: 84). At the end of the search he finds God within himself, that is, by actualizing God's attributes within himself man will become Godlike through love and achieves perfection.

By God, you were born from His attributes in the first place: Now return to His attributes, nimble and quick! you came from the clouds, the sun, and the sky; again you became attributes and went to the top of the sky.

(*Mathnawi*, II, ll. 416-7)

Realizing his glorious position, man falls in love with his creator. Thus, he does not see himself as an individual rather; he becomes a cosmic self, which embraces all our being. It is wrapped in our conscious and can be thought of as the image of the universe, which must be, unveiled (1, p: 10). In this regard Rumi says, "thus you may know that the exalted heavens / are the reflection of man's perpetual faculties / Did not the hand of the majestic God create / first the Intellect, before the two worlds? (*Mathnawi*, VI, 1935-36).

'Twas a hidden treasure: because of its fullness it burst forth

and made the earth more shining than the heavens.

'Twas a hidden treasure; because of its fullness it surged up and

made the earth (like) a sultan robed in satin (*Mathnawi*, I, ll. 2862-3).

The spirit of that one who at the time of *Am not I (your Lord)?* saw his Lord  
and became beside himself and intoxicated.  
He (that spirit) knows the scent of the wine because he  
drank it (before);  
when he has not drunk it, he cannot scent it (*Mathnawi*,  
II, ll. 1666-7).

Man, then, submits his will to His will, which is cosmic will and resides in Him forever.

## 5. Herbert's Concept of the Divine Love

### 5.1. Introduction

Herbert's love for God is mystical in the sense that he is "... seeking the steady, unbroken consciousness of the presence of God that he sees in himself and in the universe" (25, p: 384). He expresses his joy for the moment he feels the presence of God within himself and laments for the days of his absence, He is conscious of man's disobedience and fatal sin; yet, strives to confirm to the will of God. Man, as the tenant of God, can only return to Him through love which is the recovery for the body and soul. This return or union with God is attained through an insight, which transcends ordinary human knowledge.

At an early age Herbert decided that the emotional peace and satisfaction he looked for was not in the love of women. The theme of his first two poems, which he sent to his mother in 1610, was the inadequacy of earthly love:

Cannot thy love  
Heighten a spirit to sound out thy praise  
As well as any she? (2, p: 49)

Elsewhere he says, "for my own part, my meaning (dear mother) is, in these sonnets, to declare my resolution to be, that my poor abilities in poetry, shall be all and ever consecrated to God's glory" (Ibid, p: 51).

In order to have a full grasp of Herbert's poetry, an understanding of the philosophy of Saint Augustine, the Christian

theologian and philosopher, who lived in the fifth century, is essential. Augustine's concept of love, his ideas about the will of God, the role of knowledge in loving God, the dynamic force of love, and man's restlessness implemented by God to lead man toward Himself have greatly influenced Herbert's concept of Divine love. Besides using certain images and concepts of St. Augustine in his works, it has become known that "Herbert had read Saronarole's *De Simplicitate Vitae Christinae* where Augustine's passages including the one regarding restlessness appear (26, p: 147). There are also good reasons to think that Herbert had read the *Confessions* itself since, as Wood mentions, the works of St. Augustine feature prominently in Herbert's will (Ibid). Joseph Summers has also emphasized that Augustine is the only church father mentioned in Herbert's will. Moreover, as Helen White has remarked, popular works read in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were the *Prayers* and *Meditation*. The latter is comprised mainly of selections from the *Confessions* and it is reasonable to assume that what was popular for the age, would have appealed to Herbert as well (25, p: 147).

### **5.2. St. Augustine's Concept of Love**

St. Augustine believes that "every created thing has its specific kind of love in that it loves according to its proper nature, and is impelled by that love to seek its own place (21, p: 61). Herbert's idea is in accordance with that of St. Augustine. He agrees with the idea that creatures are good and have their own place. As Summers believes, order and rational edification were inevitably the proper expression of love and the service of God required the fullness of God's creation, the rejection of any parts is implied the Manichean heresy that evil had the power of creation (22, p:66). Indeed God's goodness leads man to an appreciation of His generosity and His proper adoration. It seems that according to St. Augustine it is love that permits man to move upward. In his *Metaphysics*, the natural direction of the heart is upward toward God, "with love as the efficient cause" (26, p: 151). Herbert agrees with Augustine in that love is God's gift by which one is put aflame. It is also "the weight of the soul that would bear a man wither so ever and if properly directed leads man to perfection (Ibid, p: 152). Yet, one needs God's help to go through the path. If God's will does not overcome man's will he will not be able to start the journey.



### 5.3. Self Knowledge and Divine Love

Soul can ascend to the supreme Good only by love and love for its advance toward perfection must be supported by knowledge. Burnaby believes that knowledge must somehow be in ourselves, though not derived from self-perception; it can be based only on a form or pattern actually present to the soul, which can hold to it only by way of love (3, p:37). This knowledge is to be experienced and its center is in the heart, the center of consciousness. To gain such knowledge one does not need the senses. It is similar to a kind of vision or immediate apprehension. Burnaby points out that in Augustine's mental trinity, the mind's self-knowledge and self-understanding closely correspond to the self-contemplating activity (Ibid, p:69). But Herbert believes that the path of knowledge is barred to man since he is so created that without God's grace, man can never achieve it. In *Man's Medley*, Herbert says,

Not that he [man] may not here  
taste of the cheer,  
But as birds drink, and straight lift up their head.  
So me must sip and think  
of better drink  
lie may attain to, after he is dead line (11, ll. 19-24).

In *Mattens* he say's,

Teach me thy love to know;  
That this new light, [knowledge] which now I see,  
May both the work and workman show:  
Then by a Sunne-beam I will climb to thee (ll. 17-20).

Man's restlessness, here leads him to gain more knowledge of the Divine through self-knowledge which, in turn, brings about a higher degree of love in man.

### 5.4. Man's Restlessness

Knowledge may act as a means to achieve the love of God, while man's restlessness is the dynamic force behind it to lift him upward. Augustine's *Confessions* will shed further light on his concept of restlessness.

... and man, being a part of Thy creations desires to  
praise Thee, Thou movest us to delight in praising

Thee: For Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee (26, p: 148).

Beginning his autobiography by man's restlessness, Augustine does not aim at telling the present situation of man rather, as Wood thinks, he wants to show us what he became; thus, he does not praise himself, but he praises God (Ibid). He shows his progression from restlessness to delight, and gives his readers the promise of final rest. Augustine begins *Confession* with the story of creation till he comes to the idea of man's restlessness. Man has been created for God and is; therefore, restless because he is away from Him. Then, Augustine follows the story of creation to the seventh day, "the day of God's rest which is symbolic of the rest awaiting man (Ibid, p: 184). In *Confessions*, he says,

the seventh day ... hast sanctified ... that which thou didst after Thy works, which were very good, resting on the seventh day that we also after our works may repose in thee also in the Sabbath of eternal life (Ibid, p: 150).

##### **5.5. God's Love for Man and Man's Love for God**

Herbert's view of man is that of a tenant who is, at the same time, the best manifestation of God on earth. It is only man who is capable of loving God, returning to Him and gaining perfection. In his poem "Redemption", Herbert says that God is man's landlord. Having been tenant long to a rich Lord, /Not trying, I resolved to be bold." (ll.1-2). The idea implies that man's existence has been given to him temporarily. In return for God's mercy and goodness in creating man, he should return to God as he was, pure and clean, or else he has disturbed His being. This tenant has been almost bestowed his landlord's attributes except rest. In "The Pulley", one reads:

When God at first made man,  
Having a glasse of blessings standing by;  
Let us (said he) poure on him all we can:  
Let the worlds riches, which dispersed lie,  
contract into a span (ll. 1-5).

It is in accordance with St. Augustine's idea as well, "...of all things that are made it is man and man only that is made in the image of God (3, p: 23). Elsewhere he says. "God made man for us, to be an example of humility, and to prove God's love toward us" (Ibid, p: 44). God's love for man has been completely fulfilled by His sending His son in order to rescue man. In "Dialogue" the final stanza is "to reiterate what He had planned for (24, p: 112) "My clay, my creature" (line 27) and to remind man of the sublime gift by which He parted with His own son. In return for God's love for man, it is man's chief duty to praise and glorify God. Since to Herbert "man stood in relation to the rest of the universe as the priest to his congregation (22, p: 105). In "Providence" he says,

of all creatures both in sea and land  
*Onely* to man thou hast made known thy wayes,  
And put the penne alone into his hand,  
And made him secretarie of thy praise (ll. 5-8).

Man is the worlds high priest: he doth present  
The sacrifice for all; while they below  
Unto the service mutter an ascent,  
Such as springs use that fall, and windes the blow (ll. 13-16).

### **5.6. The Redemptive Power of Love**

In Herbert's poetry love is presented as a dynamic force capable of renewing the heart, man's redemption, the unifying element in the world, and the cure for sin. Herbert believes that God has exercised a three-fold power in everything. The third one is the spiritual power by which all outward blessings are turned into inward advantages (26, p: 271). It is through this power that the benign God of love "uses his penetrating intimate gaze to rejuvenate the restless, sinful heart" (David: 13). In "The Glance" he says,

If thy first glance so powerful he,  
A mirth but open'd and seal'd up again,  
What wonders shall we feel, when we shall see  
Thy full-ey'd love (ll. 17-20).

Elsewhere in “The Forerunners” Herbert anticipates a visit from his God. “The harbingers are come, see, see their marki” (line 1). He is glad that those monarch’s servants who are coming, leave him his “... best room, /Ev’n all my heart, and what is lodged there:” (ll. 7-8) Thus, with strong anxiety Herbert shows human weakness and sinfulness which are cured and removed by God’s love. Indeed, the action of Divine love upon the heart as Martin thinks is not a displacement, a casting out of different or alien subjects but rather, a recovery of the body and soul to which love has always been entitled (13, p:47). In “Love II” he says. “Thou shall recover all thy goods in kinde, /who wert diseased by usurping lust” (ll. 11-12). The conclusion of the poem, that is, the result of the recovery of body and soul is a total incorporation of all being in continual praising of the Divine. In this way the lover feels a kind of harmony between himself and the whole existence. “All knees shall bow to thee; all wits shall rise, /And praise him who did make and mend our eies” (*Love II*: 13-14). The outcome of such an understanding is the denouncement of all sorts of absurdities and futilities.

Herbert identifies God with love capable of healing the troubles of one’s heart. In *Longing* he says,

My love, my sweetness, heart!  
 By these thy feet, at which my heart  
 Lies all the yeare,  
 Pluck out thy dart,  
 And heal my troubled breast which cries,  
 Which dyes (ll. 79-84).

In “Love I” Herbert refers to “thy glorious name” (line 3) meaning the name of love itself which has redeemed man from eternal punishment (13, p: 39). “Good Friday” begins with proper meditation:

How shall I measure out thy blood?  
 How shall I count what thee befell,  
 And each grief tell?  
 Shall I thy woes  
 Number according to thy foes?

Or shall each leaf  
Which falls in Autumne, score a grief? (ll. 2-10)  
But it ends with a prayer,  
Sinne being gone, oh fill the place, And keep  
possession with thy grace; Lest sinne take courage and  
return,  
And all the writings blot or burn (ll. 29-32).

Structurally, the poem is divided into two parts and as Tuve thinks they are probably combined because each deals with the way in which sorrowing love, by possessing the heart is a cure for sin (23, p:106). Thus, within the word love, there is an ultimate significance to unit all human actions.

Love is not only the force behind human action but pervades the world. In the first line of "Love I" Herbert professes the creative power of love. It is love that joins the world and preserves the universe. Love is not only creative but also a concord and harmony between dissimilarities. Tuve compares Herbert's poetry to music; this comparison denotes harmony which is also seen in Spenser and in the neo-Platonic or cosmological phrasing as well (Ibid, p:146).

Being inspired and motivated by love, man experiences total absorption of intellectual activity in which his senses are liberated. His heart is prompted by the Divine fire that endows man with a new insight. In his renewed world view, the lover gains vision through which he sees all particles and creatures moving toward God and praising I-him, In "Love II" he says,

... them shall our brain  
All her invention on thine altar lay,  
And there in hymnes send back thy fire again:  
Our eies shall see thee, which before saw dust;  
Dust blown by wit, till that they both was blinde: (ll.6-16)

At the end of "Jordan II" Herbert stresses the necessity of copying out one specific kind of love which is heavenly love. His mental conflict between sacred and profane love is apparent in "Dulnesse" where asking Christ for "quickness that I may ... . praise thee" (ll. 3-4) he shows his desire to pay complete devotion

to God but at the same time, is conscious of his weakness. The main problem lies in man's will and "what makes the human will choose to be ignorant of evil and of good and whether it is curable or not" (23, p: 118). Herbert shows the dual aspect of man as well as his attempt to rise while being conscious of his sinful condition after the fall, yet, at the same time, he is aware of the redemptive power of Christ and the love of God for man.

### 5.7. The Mystical Aspect of Herbert's Divine Love

The Herbert's Divine love is heavenly and mystical in the sense that he seeks his God for His own sake and is certain of His answer. Herbert did not love God to guarantee his salvation; his aim in revolting against the norms of his age was an act of commitment. For the main part he wrote poetry to compensate for the dominant neglect of true devotion to God since he found freedom in the acceptance of faith. Although the seventeenth-century lovers of piety "cherished the ideal of a pure and Saintless holiness" (25: 144), they considered the glimmer aspects of God and forgot His other aspects such as His love for man. But, Herbert thinks of the presence of God everywhere answering the call of those who yearns for Him. He sees the essence of God in all particles of the world. In "Providence" he says,

Thou art in small things great, not small in any:  
Thy even praise can neither rise, nor fall.  
Thou art in small things one, in each thing many:  
For thou art infinite in one and all (ll. 40-44).

With this sense of presence of God comes the sense of the mystery of God who loves man even if he forgets him or else He would not have sent his only son to redeem man. In "The Collar" Herbert presents his mystical view of God and the kind of union with Him which he has in mind. 'Me thoughts heard one calling, child, /And I reply'd, my Lord (ll. 34-35). After so many callings for his Lord. Herbert feels the presence of God within himself, that is what is meant by saying that Herbert's aim is mystical since by definition mysticism is "the successful effort of the individual spirit to get into direct, immediate relation with God" (25, p: 366). His aim was oneness with God.

Herbert talks to God like one whose business in the world is



most with God. He is the great poet with "... the very human saint who gives fresh and moving utterances to the aspiration, failures, and victories of the spiritual life" (4, p: 143). In "Affliction I", "Discipline", "The Collar", and "The Pulley," the poet strives to devote the highest degree of worship and devotion to God. He deliberately chooses the Divine love and devotes his art to it, in this sense, poetry was not only something that Herbert took seriously, but perhaps as White says the most profound expression of his personal energy and identity (25, p:143). Herbert's great desire is to be allowed to love God. In the two closing lines of "Affliction I", after trying to find some other services, he suddenly turns back to his first love, crying out. "Ah my deare God! thought I am clean forgot, let me not love thee, If I love thee not" (ll. 65-66). For God has no rival in his heart. That is why he "suffers so acutely under the ebb and flow of his own zeal" (2, p: 55).

### 5.8. The Itinerary of Herbert's Divine Love

**5.8.1. Self-Purification:** Man's first step towards the Divine Love, is to purify himself of all vices in order to be able to love God and unite with Him. In his poem "Redemption", Herbert expresses the process involved in purification which involves the cutting away of all ties and hindrances on the way to love of God. In "Pilgrimage" he expresses the notion that man has to purge himself from moral impurities such as pride and passion. It is only then that love fills the heart and substitutes the other impulses. In "Discipline" he says,

Throw away thy rod,  
Throw away thy wrath  
O my God,  
Take the gentle path (ll. 1-4).

Then let wrath remove  
Love will do the deed:  
For with love  
Stonie hearts will bleed (ll. 17-20).

The love intended here is the true love, which consumes the false ones. The heat of Divine fire will inflame the heart and the soul and replaces lust with the pure desire for the Divine.

**5.8.2. The Union with the Divine:** The final purpose of man's existence is to enjoy the presence of God and to unite with Him through love. In "Psalms", one reads, "No man has ever loved me and failed at my attaining ... love me, I have not to be approached through any go-between: love itself sets you in my breast (ll. 119-85)" (3, p: 343). Augustine recognizes three phases of the Divine image in man:

The first is the ineradicable likeness to God in which man is created, the second is the temporal and progressive recovery of this likeness, obscured by sin; and the third is the perfection and maturity of the likeness (3, p: 301).

His call is answered at the closing lines of "The Banquet" where the speaker rededicates his life to the service of divine love.

Let the wonder of his pitie  
Be my dittie,  
And take up my lines and life:  
Hearken under peïn of death,  
Hands and breath;  
Strive in this, and love the strife (ll. 49-54).

God's entering man's breast, man's rest in Him, and his union with Him has a contemplative nature. Merrill states,

Psychologically, the reader devotee meditates upon creation, imagining the variety of creation ideas within his experience: building, painting, and so forth. He is inspired to develop creation stories in his mind until eventually a qualitative change suddenly occurs and he sees the religious insight that the phrase has been attempting to evoke all along in reader's mind which ultimately causes the penny to drop and the religious depth to occur (17, p:207).

Here Herbert emphasizes the self-diminishing act of God in which there is no individual rather; there is an integrated being absorbed in the Omnipotent Divine. "Love III" concludes with

restoration to God's favour. Man is now accepted as a guest by the God of love. Garret thinks that the poem indubitably conveys to the reader Herbert's depiction of the movement of the individual soul through humility to epiphany, from shame of man's imperfect nature to the revelation of God's all-embracing love (9, p:144). It is also in accordance with the unity and the process of man's perfection as presented in Herbert's poetry that *The Temple* ends with "Love III". Its ending is the Christian's entering the heaven assured by the compassion and forgiveness of his heavenly father. The poem ends with the metaphor for redemption, that is, tasting and eating as well as being nourished by love in the heavenly banquet. The meal in the poem whether homely or spiritual is eaten in order to live. Thus, the end is not death rather; it is a new life and a new beginning. "Love III" concludes with man being invited to God's household as a guest. The speaker is accepted by the loving God who takes all the sins of human beings upon himself.

In short, Herbert's poetry ends with confirmation and resolution through love. After purification from vices and worldly fetters man becomes aware of his divine nature and comes to know that he is created out of the image of God and thus is led to know and love his creator. This experience and meditation upon one's creation is the source of vision, which is revealed to man all at once. Absorbed in the thought of his creator, man feels that the one sought for is nowhere but in himself answering the call of those who love and search Him.

## 6. Conclusion

The aim of this research was to compare the nature of Divine Love in the poetical works of two different poets; one from the Islamic East and the other one from the Christian West. Rumi and Herbert, not having any shared background such as nationality, culture, and religion, both agree on the nature of Divine Love, its characteristics, its process, its role in man's spiritual ascension and the union with the Divine.

Different definitions of love have been offered. It has been divided into various categories such as courtly, natural, Platonic, cosmic, philosophic, and Divine love. Some have used terms such as eros, philia and agape when talking about the nature of love. No matter how different these definitions or concepts might appear, it

is agreed that love is a search for perfection. All kinds of love can be regarded as the steps on the ladder of love to gain the true and ultimate love. They are only admissible if only one regards them as the primary stages or as a practice for the love one holds for God, or else one will end up in the idolization of the earthly beloved and succumb to sterility. Love is implemented in all human beings as a force for a psychic rebirth and perfection, which can be achieved through knowledge and a willing attempt to purify oneself from impurities. It is only in this way that man gains his cosmic self and becomes God's image on earth.

Divine love is presented as a remedy for man's anxieties, and unifying power in both Herbert's and Rumi's poetry. To Rumi, the worth of a man is proportionate to his realization of the ultimate and the degree of his love toward Him. In Herbert's poetry as well, love is both a desire and need. God's attributes such as pity and tenderness implement His love in man. The reason why God has created man restless is to make him constantly cleaving toward Him. This was His desire to toss man to Himself through His love. Indeed, man has no other way to find rest until he unites with the Absolute Reality. This reality is the unifying power dominant in the whole universe. According to Rumi and Herbert all things are charged with love, and thus with God. As the invisible principle, love is not only the cause of creation but also the unifying power of all the particles, which constantly strive to gain union with each other. Divine love is also the source of evolution in the world. Through its dynamic force, love adds to the beauty of life, removes ugliness, and takes away one's pain and vanity since the effect of Divine love is felt in the heart. The displacement of the undesirable forces and tendencies as well as the recovery of the soul is the agent of love. In loving God, the lover sees himself in harmony with the whole existence since all are charged with love of God. In this way all the senses of priority and absurdity vanish, and man can gain his truly cosmic self which restores him from worldly anxieties. Loving another worldly finite being does not satisfy man since it is only a connection between two limited beings who need to be guided. In loving God, on the other hand, man rises to higher levels of existence. It is the absorption of the finite within the infinite. The true lover is one who keeps up with the attributes of his beloved and in the case of God as the beloved, man actualizes

His attributes within him to a great extent and that is what is almost meant by union with the Divine.

In the poetry of both Herbert and Rumi, man is a pilgrim on the way to perfection. In Rumi's poetry man is an emanation of God and does not get perfection until he returns to the Divine Being. In this return he must cleanse himself in return for God's mercy in creating him pure. In Herbert's poetry as well man is the tenant of God, but at the same time is made out of the image of God. He has also been created restless until he finds rest in God.

By love bitter things become sweet, by love pieces of  
copper become golden:  
By love dregs become clear; by love pains become  
healing;  
By love the dead is made living; by love the king is  
made a slave.  
This love, moreover, is the result of knowledge:  
who (ever) sat in foolishness on such a throne?  
(*Mathnawi*, II, 1529-332)

The source of man's ultimate joy and happiness resides in permanent beauty, that kind of beauty which is not subject to ugliness and deterioration through the passage of time. The search for such a creative beauty cannot be fulfilled without the proper understanding of its nature. Herbert and Rumi, having reached the same vision of beauty, share the same disposition about the epistemology of true love as well.

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