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Phenomenology of love: the destructive and constructive nature of love*

Alireza Farnam

Professor of Psychiatry, Research Center of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences,
Tabriz University of Medical Sciences, Iran

Masoumeh Zamanlu**

Neurosciences Research Center (NSRC), Tabriz University of Medical Sciences,
Tabriz, Iran (corresponding author)

Sahar Khoshdeli

Medical Philosophy and History Research Center, Tabriz University of Medical
Sciences, Tabriz, Iran

Abstract

Love, this eminent humane experience, has been explored not only by writers and poets, but also by philosophers, psychologists and even experimental scientists. This paper aims to discuss a novel aspect in phenomenology of love, as the concept of destructive and constructive nature of love, which is to the best of our knowledge, presented for the first time. The fundamental idea of this paper was obtained from verses of Hafiz, then polished by theories of Robert Cloninger and several other thinkers in the field of human emotions. Many verses of Hafiz display love experience as a necessary step towards growth, in a way that could be evinced further by the development of the "self-aware psych" introduced by Cloninger. He introduces the "self-aware psych" as one of the three constituting domains of human mind and personality, the intuitive essence bringing integrity for personality. If self-aware psych flourishes by favorable growth and development, it would prepare the ground for creativity, wisdom and well-being, otherwise, personality disorders would be contingent. The destructive and constructive nature of love, towards development of self-awareness and mental growth, is further determined by re-explaining the proposed theory of "ego as a complex" by Carl Jung, the theory of "network of intentionality" by John Searle, and the theory of "emotional processing" by Edna Foa and Michael Kozak in this context.

Keywords: Love, phenomenology, emotion, excellence of self-awareness, Hafiz.

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** E-mail: m_zamanlu@yahoo.com

Introduction

The two thousand years old history of philosophy could actually be considered the history of thinking about self-awareness, because *thinking* started initially, with the formation of awareness of humans to themselves, as aware creatures (Cloninger, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2013; Cloninger, Zohar, & Cloninger, 2010). Iranians, as one of the most ancient nations in the world, have always posed novel and genuine ideas in the field of *thinking*. *Hafiz Shirazi* is one of the summits of the Iranian literature and quite well-known worldwide. Seemingly, his literary permanence is the result of his deep reflections on life and spirit of the mankind. Explorations in the mystical poems of Hafiz and in the depth of many other Iranian literary and culture, discloses brilliant ideas and instructions for humane mental growth. Similarly, many modern psychologic approaches are being introduced demonstrating *mental growth* as an important priority. The most delicate formulation in this regard is the theory of Robert C Cloninger, proposing the human self-awareness as one of the three constituting domains of human mind and personality (together with the "temperament" or the instinct and the "character" or the conceptual dimension of personality). His theory emphasizes the growing importance of self-awareness in mental health. Robert Cloninger is an American psychiatrist and geneticist, and one of the most impressive theoreticians of personality and growth, well-known for his extensive researches on the biological, psychological, social, and spiritual foundation of human personality. His comprehensive theory has met with great enthusiasm among psychiatrists.

Though most philosophers do not consider positive aspects for love experience, except scant figures including Plato, there are outstanding psychologists, poets and litterateurs admiring love as a productive experience. Therefore, it seems worthy to have a contemplative exploration in Phenomenology of love experience considering the proposed positive aspects.

The current paper is contemplation in concepts of *Hafiz* about experience of love and development of self-awareness. We believe that *Hafiz* had a true and deep understanding of the humane mental structures; therefore he apprehended the necessity of unlocking this structure for any basic change in it; hence destruction of the previous mental structures and replacement of more balanced, new and integrated ones and ultimately closure of the system is a miraculous humane turnover, which occurs during experience of love. This claim is further determined by re-explaining the proposed theory of "ego as a complex" by Carl Jung, the theory of "network of intentionality" by John Searle, the theory of "emotional processing" by Edna Foa and Michael Kozak, and the theory of "personality elements" by Robert Cloninger in this context. It would be described that the humane mental structure which seems to get unlocked and improved by love, is actually the "ego" which is organized on a "network of intentionality" and love induces an "emotional processing" in it.

Experiencing love

Hafiz Shirazi believes experiencing love is an essential step towards promotion and excellence of self-awareness in human. In his concept, every person should experience love before his/her death; otherwise, his/her life would be incomplete, without learning the great lesson of existence:

"Be the lover if not, one day, the world's work endeth

*From the workshop of existence the picture of thy purpose unread"*¹ (Homayounfar, 2010)

Hafiz, describes the life of mankind not in vain and purposeless but for fulfillment of a goal: each and every humanbeing should reach a higher degree of "existence" before his/her death, exactly as introduced by Cloninger as consecutive "planes of being". Therefore, a specific life style including practical contact with inner and heartly events is necessary to fulfill this goal. Experiencing love is one of the most important experiences in this regard.

Love lies among eight universal emotions of humankind. These eight emotions include; fear, anger, disgust, shame, sadness, happiness, surprise and love. Though love is an emotion, besides its considerable arousal, it is based on cognitive structures, and ultimately presenting behavioral tendencies. Therefore, emotional arousal, cognition, and behavioral tendencies make love a complete form of "affection". It should be regarded that affections are not mere emotions, but rely upon cognitive structures which make them understandable and humane. This way, many thinkers including *Hafiz* consider "love experience" necessary for escalation of self-awareness in human.

The destructive nature of love

For *Hafiz*, and in the real life of course, love is not a calm and pleasuring experience, but a stormy one, surrounding the whole existence of a person and causing robust turbulences in the deepest piles of his/her being:

"When I became lover, I spake saying: I have carried off the jewel of my desire

*I knew not what, blood-scattering waves, this sea hath"*² (Homayounfar, 2010)

Nevertheless, *love* is not just an impressive accident that emerges and decays, but a spiritual event meant to be eternal. It is meant to put the humanbeings in a special arousal state and to cause deep modulations in their existential status, in their attitude towards the universe, towards the self and towards others; and to grant them the tolerance of high arousals. *Hafiz* believes love commences serious tendency of promotion in humans, and this is the blessing of fate to return us to the true way.

We believe that *Hafiz's* sonnets could be a guideline for promotion of self-awareness. Guides in the sonnets of *Hafiz* have deep similarities with "growth states of self-awareness" in the formulations of *Robert Cloninger*. Love, as described by *Hafiz*, is actually the "listening to psych" described by *Cloninger*, and similar to the transcendentalists' views described by some

American thinkers; the opportunity of the humanbeing for knowing him/herself and thereby to capture the wisdom of virtue and universal unity of being (Cloninger, 2004).

The constructive nature of love

Hafiz portrays love with constructive nature together with the described destructive nature, in the spirit of humans, in order to transcend it:

*"Although love's intoxication hath ruined me: yet
By that ruination, the foundation of own existence is prosperous"³
(Homayounfar, 2010)*

Now, what is destroyed by love in the existence of human, and then what is constructed? Where of the human existence is the place for this destruction and construction?

Seemingly, changes include awareness, attention, attitude and cognition of humans in its widest meaning. According to *Hafiz*, love changes the human point of view and reveals the hidden aspects of life; increasing the "beauty perception" and modulating interpretative orders:

*"By its grace, thy beautiful face explained to us a verse of the favor
For that reason, in our explanation, is nought save other than
grace and beauty"⁴ (Homayounfar, 2010)*

Anyone who has experienced love would agree that it resembles a fire rather than a simple sensation and emotion. Love burns the existential state of psych and leaves the ground prepared for new growth. We believe that the formulation changed in this regard is in fact what *John Searl* calls the "network of intentionality" and its related mental structure.

Mental infrastructures destructed and constructed by love

Network of intentionality or the mental background

According to *Searl*, when we believe that "it rains", this is not a sole and independent belief but it relies on a network of other beliefs like, "rain makes wet" or "rain comes from the clouds" and etc. It means that each intentionality or representation depends on a larger network to which it is an affiliate. *Searl* states: intentions in the networks of intentionality state a direction of fit with contents which determine their conditions of satisfaction, yet they do not function in an atomistic fashion, independently, but rather in relation with several other intentional networks (Searle, 2004). Consequently when the roots of networks of intentionality are seriously followed, ultimately, they bring about the bedrocks of mental capacities that are not consist of voluntary states, but more of the unconscious preconditions of Intentional states.

Searl uses the term "background" in substitution for network of intentionality. According to *Searl*: background is the set of abilities, capacities, tendencies, and dispositions that humans possess though not in their voluntary states. Background includes a network of beliefs, desires, and other intentional states.

We should regard that many of these backgrounds have been created in a defective procedure and as we are not aware of them, they always keep influencing our attitudes and behaviors. *Jung* says "Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate". *Hafiz* believes that this defective network collapses with the power of experiencing love and this paves the way for a more balanced and genuine network.

*"In memory of thy eye, myself ruined and I will make:
The foundation of the ancient covenant, strong I will make"⁵
(Homayounfar, 2010)*

The basic question here is that: what causes sustainability and dispositions of the intentionality network, even when the contents and beliefs are incorrect?

Our beliefs are words and statements, in need of energy to push the linguistic cognition ahead. Linguistic cognition is a moving structure in need of energy to keep its movement, and this energy is provided by "arousal". Arousal is the common factor of emotion and cognition. That is why when we get emotionally disturbed and aroused, we begin self-talking. Accordingly, our linguistic cognition performs the other important duty: contributing to regulate our arousal level. We always need to keep our arousal in a balanced level, which is neither too high nor too low. This was called Nirvana principle by Freud, implying that our psych is a self-organizing system with constant endeavor to keep the arousal level at optimum. Hence the networks of intentionality, with their pre-determined operation, are actually in line with the calmness-disturbance dualism towards decreasing our tensions of uncertainty. Uncertainty and inability to understand the situations are highly disturbing in mental functions. Thereupon, basic backgrounds or the so-called networks of intentionality, even when they are not completely true, make life situations more understandable and alleviate the tensions of uncertainty. For this reason, our "attitudinal statements" are highly persistent and long lasting, even despite discrediting evidences. We unconsciously prefer to continue believing our mental backgrounds even if the opposite is proved. Networks of intentionality help us keep calm and at the same time react rapidly, especially in critical situations, needless of evaluating every detail completely. Consequently, the self-organizing psych prefers to maintain the mental backgrounds for long times, even if they are not completely compatible with reality. But after some times, in the proper chance, falling in love changes the rules.

Mental complexes and archetypes

A more detailed description of mental backgrounds is introduced in one of the most famous theories in psychology, which is the theory of mental complexes proposed by *Carl Jung*. According to *Jung*, *complexes* are groups of unconscious ideas associated with particular events or experiences, toned with strong emotions. Complexes are formed around intrinsic models of the world named as archetypes by *Jung*. Archetypes have been determined deeply in the disposition of humans, and therefore they could be

called “genetically determined” in biology. Complexes are self-perpetuating, in the way that they might be reinforced by environmental events and by the individual’s selective attention or inattention.

As for the complexes, their affective tones endow them with a considerable psychic energy: whether a positive or a negative energy, whether a mild or a strong one. When the complex is more intense, it is endowed with greater emotion and psychic energy, induces more imagery, and provokes more tendencies to express the complex in actions (Sadock, Sadock, & Ruiz, 2000). Complexes are formed for the balance and management of mental interactions; however, they might resist mental growth.

Ego as a complex

One of the interesting and confusing complexes determined in the *Jungian* theory is the *ego*. *Ego*, generally, implies the concept of a person of him/herself. In philosophy *ego* refers to a “conscious thinking subject”, and in psychology the most detailed, basic and applicational description about *ego* has been proposed by Sigmund Freud, as a psychoanalytic definition. *Ego* is one of the three parts of the psychic apparatus, defined in Sigmund Freud’s “structural model of the psyche” (lying between id and super-ego); the part of the mind that mediates between the conscious and the unconscious, responsible for reality testing and for a sense of personal identity. Therefore the *Freudian ego* bridges the intra-psychic elements and the external world, functioning to manage the conscious life of the individual. Technically, *ego* is a large mental processor taking input from the universe and giving the output of behavior. This way, *ego* with all its attributes, is generally an extensive *mental background* or *network of intentionality*, and in detail, it is a vast *mental complex* of our identity (Searle, Dennett, & Chalmers, 1997). *Ego* is not necessarily a complete background; but a mental complex created as the abstraction of the influence of important people and events, along with the related cognitive, emotional and behavioral tendencies. Other complexes present in the mental structures, may align or oppose with the complex of *ego*. And as described before, *ego* itself, similar to any other complex, is formed for the balance and management of mental interactions; however, it might resist mental growth.

When reducing *ego*’s functions for better understanding, they could be considered as based upon stimulus, response and meaning, for each and any experience and event. In other words, procedural memory creates the feelings and reactions, then semantic memory provides the meanings; while episodic memory with temporo-spatial capacity is absent. This is true for most people; however, developed individuals bring their self-aware psych with their episodic memory into these functions. Fear is a good example. Fear is one of the functions of *ego*, for defence of the individual, and is evidently based upon stimulus, response and meaning.

Emotional processing

Foa and *Kozak* introduced "Emotional processing theory" in their original research about treatment of phobias (severe and sickly fears), and the theory

proved to be useful and is in clinical use now. The theory indicates that in order to make any change in "fear structure", you have to present new mental information which is incompatible with the old ones, and this necessitates activating the cognitive-emotional system and replacing fear with new concepts (Sadock et al., 2000). "Fear structure" is similar to *Searl's* intentionality network though in a smaller scale; therupon what is true for fear might be true for intentionality network as well. In this context, *love* is one of the most important means for activating cognitive-emotional systems such as *Searl's* intentionality network. *Love*, with its outstanding arousal, activates the cognitive-emotional systems which could be considered as an "intentionality network" and propose it to fundamental corrective transformations. In fact, *love* affords the necessary arousal energy, in terms of severity and duration, for actual changes in the deepest parts of human psychic apparatus.

In case that an intentionality network is destroyed by the power of *love*, then where would be the source of new mental structures for constructing the new network? The reply of *Hafiz* is "the ancient covenant", which reminds us of the mental archetypes. Which is the exact archetype, legendarily used by love?

Self as the archetype of ego

Self is another term implying the concept of the individuals of their own identity. *Self* is an important term in psychology, humanism and philosophy. Philosophically, *self* is the condition of identity that makes one subject of experience distinct from all others. The *self* is sometimes understood as a unified being essentially connected to consciousness, awareness, and agency or, at least, with the faculty of rational choice. However, in psychology, especially modern psychology, the earliest formulation of the *self* is derived from the distinction between the *self* as I, the subjective knower, and the *self* as Me, the object that is known (Zahavi, 2008). In *Jungian* meta-psychology, the unconscious *self* gives rise to integration, order, and individuation. *Self*, in psychology is more fundamental than *ego*; actually *self* is the *archetype* of the *ego*, the innate potential of human for capturing wholeness. *Self* is an unconscious ordering principle directing the psychic life in its overall theme; and executively, it gives rise to the *ego*, hence mutually compromises with the external reality and is partly shaped by it. This is the same understanding which claims that: *the complex of ego is formed around the archetype of self*. *Self* becomes apparent in dreams, fantasies, and altered states of consciousness, emerging from the unconscious to bring about directions in conscious life (Sadock et al., 2000).

When the individual lives his/her middle age, the *ego* appears more to the *self* than to the conscious realm of life. *Jung* named this developmental process as *individuation*, which is the drive for individuals to become unique and to fulfill the spiritual propensities which are common to all humanity. This process often requires withdrawal from earlier identities, seeking new paths and changing conventional definitions of success and achievement.

This transition often has the paradoxical effect of greater creativity together with broader and more mature relationships (Sadock et al., 2000).

As mentioned above, *ego* is in fact an intentionality network of our identity, and not necessarily a complete one, a mental complex created as the abstraction of the influence of important people and events, mixed with their cognitive, emotional and behavioral conditionings. This complex relies upon and is influenced by the *self*, the deeper and more ancient archaic psychic structure; and paradoxically, preventing full emergence and rising of the *self*. Surprisingly, though *ego* is the *eminence* of the *self*, it becomes the barrier for its perfection. In order to flourish the archaic *self* in its more advanced theme, the superficial structure of *ego* needs to be destroyed; thereafter, a considerable inner growth and development would be facilitated.

*"You are the veil of the way towards yourself
And happy who traverses the way unveiled"*⁶ (Homayounfar, 2010)

*"Revering wine, I washed away my own image
Selfishness cannot be when the self-image is unknown"*⁷
(Homayounfar, 2010)

*"I've fallen into the lagoon of me and us,
So bring the wine, till to get me rid of we and I"*⁸ (Homayounfar, 2010)

*"Oath to your lips, I, like a candle,
Have no aim more than defeating my ego"*⁹ (Homayounfar, 2010)

Seemingly, *Hafiz* hymns gracefully that growth begins with the development of *ego*, afterwards, when *ego* reaches maturity, *ego* itself will be a barrier for mental and spiritual excellence. This is because this excellence depends on prosperity and emergence of a deeper center of existence, as described to be the *self*. Hence, the grown *complex* of *ego* ought to be destroyed in order to pave the way for emergence of *self*. *Hafiz* recommends "love" to put *ego* aside; *love* with its emotional arousal is capable of destructing this mature complex, and bring about a psychic renewal and thrive. An important emotion which may accompany *love*, in its infatuation and for reinforcing its destructive and constructive nature, is "surprise", surprise for the beauty and glory of the beloved:

*"Loving you, like the plant of marvel,
Your consummation, as the perfection of marvel,
Made me vanquished honorarily,
As I felt, glory of marvel"*¹⁰ (Homayounfar, 2010)

Here, emergence of *self* washes away all conflicts and paradoxes, because mental functions go beyond the separated parts of *ego*, *superego* and *id*, towards unity and wholeness.

*"My own old habits all turned stale,
I got what I asked, His wind in my sail"*¹¹ (Homayounfar, 2010)

Conclusion

The concept of destructive and constructive nature of love is compiled and introduced in this paper, which is, to the best of our knowledge, for the first time. Conclusively, *love* is neither a simple emotion nor a negligible experience, but a basic prerequisite for mental growth and self-awareness excellence. *Love* with its high arousal, unlocks the basic structures of psych and reforms them. The main of these basic structures is the *ego*, which is the center of self-awareness, and actually a mental background and a mental complex of our identity. It constitutes a package of emotions, cognitions and behaviors for our conscious interaction with the world. According to Foa and Kozack, for reforming a mental background basically, the system should be activated and opened, then the defective structures should be destroyed and ultimately be replaced by new and well-adjusted structures. As activation of these systems require a strong mental energy, which can be provide only by experiencing love. Accordingly, falling in love is an opportunity for excellence of personality; and this should be minded strongly when psychologists and psychiatrists deal with love and lovers.

Notes

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|--|--|-----|
| ناخوانده نقش مقصود از کارگاه هستی | عاشق شو ار نه روزی کار جهان سرآید | ۱. |
| ندانستم که این دریا چه موج خون فشان دارد | چو عاشق می شدم گفتم که بردم گوهر مقصود | ۲. |
| اساس هستی من زان خرابی آباد است | اگرچه مستی عشقم خراب کرد مرا | ۳. |
| زین سبب جز لطف و خوبی نیست در تفسیر ما | روی خوبت آیتی از لطف بر ما کشف کرد | ۴. |
| بنای عهد قدیم استوار خواهم کرد | به یاد چشم تو خود را خراب خواهم کرد | ۵. |
| تو خود حجاب خودی حافظ از میان برخیز | میان عاشق و معشوق هیچ حایل نیست | ۶. |
| که تا خراب کنم نقش خود پرستیدن | به می پرستی از آن نقش خود زدم بر آب | ۷. |
| می تا خلاص بخشدم از مایی و منی | در بحر مایی و منی افتاده ام بیار | ۸. |
| شبان تیره مرادم فنای خویشتن است | به جان لبیت ای بت شیرین دهن که همچون شمع | ۹. |
| وصل تو کمال حیرت آمد | عشق تو نهال حیرت آمد | ۱۰. |
| آن را که جلال حیرت آمد | شد منهزم از کمال عزت | |
| کسب جمعیت از آن زلف پریشان کردم | از خلاف آمد عادت بطلب کام که من | ۱۱. |

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