

Love and Creativity – Paradoxal but Important Human Virtues

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Received: August 7, 2011 Accepted: September 13, 2011 Published: December 1, 2011

doi:10.5539/ijps.v3n2p266 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ijps.v3n2p266>

Abstract

Love and creativity represent a fascinating, mysterious, and paradoxal world and an analogous one as well, from this perspective. The present article shows that many features are common to the essence of love and creativity. The aim of this article is to analyze and pull together the discussion that researchers have had concerning the phenomena of love and creativity. In this article, our purpose is to define the essence of these two concepts and produce an illustration of their interconnectedness through discussing factors that are in common to these two human features. Noticing the connection between these two concepts is important because they both can affect human well-being in a profound manner.

Keywords: Love, Creativity, Paradoxes of love and creativity, Analogy of love and creativity

1. Introduction

Everything that a human being finds interesting, exciting, and pleasing, can spark love or creativity. In fact, people are almost universal in their appreciation of love and creativity (Hendrick & Hendrick, 2009; Simonton, 2009). Creativity and love are topics of ever-increasing interest, given its importance and applicability to literally every field (e.g., Prabhu, Sutton, & Sauser, 2008).

Everything is significant, extensive, wonderful, and shining in a passionate creative action. *“Everything, that is seen by the eyes of love, is beautiful”* (Duck, 1991, p. 64) is a reflection that strikes a chord from creativity as well (Girod et al., 2003; Hagman, 2005). Therefore, it seems that love and creativity manifest themselves as an ambition to make their object develop, grow, and unfold, whether it was other people, art, science, ideology, or nature.

In this article, our purpose is to define the essence of these two concepts and produce an illustration of their interconnectedness grounding on our previous studies on love and human strengths (Määttä, 2010, 2011a, b, c; Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011a, b; Uusiautti & Määttä, 2010a, b, 2011a, b) and an extensive literature review on the theme. First, we will have a look at the concepts of love and creativity and then dissect the manifold nature of these two phenomena. We have selected some interesting points of view that are to reveal the interconnected nature of these two concepts—yet being aware that the list is not at all encyclopedic. However, the perspectives we are about to highlight set up basis for our fundamental idea: at the end, we will discuss why it is important to study these two concepts together.

2. The Multiple Faces of Love and Creativity

2.1 The Concepts of Love and Creativity

Love is a complex phenomenon (Bierhoff & Schmohr, 2004). Everyone loves in his or her own way regardless

of age or gender. Love may occur in different forms: in addition to romantic love, there is love for fellow human beings (Paldanius & Määttä, 2011), friendship, parental love, love of one's country, love for nature and animals, and teachers' pedagogical love (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2011a, b).

Love for fellow humans or agape is defined by the metaphor of the Good Samaritan and manifested in practice in welfare work (e.g., Aristotle, 1981; see also Fromm, 1956). Individualistic features, position, nationality, gender, abilities, race, or language do not determine a human being's value. Those differences based on skills, intelligence, or knowledge are insignificant compared with that human basic presence that is the same for all people: the right and need to be loved, accepted, and cared for as well as the right and need to grow and develop (Bradshaw, 1996; Lanara, 1981; Sprengel & Kelly, 1992).

According to Erich Fromm (1956), "*the mature love expects that a human being has proceeded into the level of a human being who has a creative attitude towards the world. At this stage, one has freed oneself from the dependency to other people, narcissistic self-centeredness, and will to use other people in the interests of one's own.*" Fromm's definition implies that love could be considered as a virtue. Indeed, Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson (2005) have named love as one of the human virtues (see also Uusiautti & Määttä, 2011b). Respectively, creativity can be found from the list as well.

Seligman et al. (2005, p. 412) say that creativity simply means "*thinking of novel and productive ways to do things*". Sternberg and Lubart (1999) have defined creativity as the ability to produce work that is novel and appropriate. Simonton's (2009, p. 262) definition follows that of Sternberg's and Lubart's. Creativity can be defined through two conditions: First, it must be original. It means that creative ideas are novel, surprising, and unexpected; however, originality is not sufficient criterion. Creativity must also be adaptive which means that others should find the created thing adjustable or the creation should be adaptable.

Sometimes, creativity is defined only as a feature that produces concrete results (e.g., Carson, Peterson, & Higgings, 2005). Furthermore, creativity can be defined to mean only the so-called divergent creative reasoning. In the divergent working, several options for solution are kept open in a flexible way, whereas the convergent way of working concentrates on one solution in order to achieve the right convincing result. (Basadur & Hausdorf, 1996; Runco, 1993.)

2.2 Impossible to Research?

As shown in the previous chapter, it is perhaps impossible to define comprehensively what love or creativity are or are not. They are something mysterious, inexplicable, beyond all mundane; and yet, some important research on love and creativity has been conducted. Freud's coeval, Finck, ended up stating that "*you may say almost anything about love and you are presumably always right*" (Freud, 1959, p. 64).

Scott Peck (1978) argues that when studying love, we play with a mystery that is too extensive or profound to be explained by words. Hendrick and Hendrick (2009) share a more practical point of view to research on love: they divide it into naturalistic/biological and psychological/social approaches. The first one is rooted in the body, in emotion, and people's evolutionary heritage while in the latter one, concepts such as cognition, social motives, interaction and communication are of prevailing interest.

The creativity research, for its part, has pointed out that the theories of creativity are creative products by definition (e.g., Harrington, 1975; Uusikylä, 1992). The research on creativity has also regarded as suspicious: much research has been done in laboratory settings but not in real-life situations (e.g., Paulus & Brown, 2007) and creativity has even been called as "*one of psychology's orphans*" (Sternberg & Lubert, 1999, p. 4). Creativity has been modeled from various perspectives, though. For example, Paulus and Brown (2007) have presented a model of how social-motivational factors might influence the cognitive process of individual idea generation but they also claim that there is still much to learn about the complex process of creative idea generation.

Indeed, creativity is difficult to research: firstly, it may be viewed as some kind of a mental process; secondly, it can be seen as a certain type of person who exhibits creativity; and thirdly, it can refer to concrete products that result from creative working—and each of these manifestations can be researched differently (Simonton, 2009). According to Simonton (2009; see also Subotnik & Arnold, 1995), there is lack of research that pursues explaining the development of creativity.

When it comes to creativity, well-known schemas do not apply because creativity springs up in situations where it is not at all clear what strategy or behavior will yield an acceptable outcome (see Rietzschel, De Dreu, & Nijstad, 2007). Achievements in the arts and sciences provide inspiration, give comfort, decrease suffering, and improve the quality of human life; and thus are well worth assessing accurately and investigating in detail

(Carson, Peterson, & Higgins, 2005). Furthermore, creativity is understood not only as an individual's feature (a lone genius) but more often as a result of group work (see Nijstad & Levine, 2007; Simonton, 2009). Indeed, Anderson, de Dreu, and Nijstad (2004) have suggested that creativity and innovations should be studied more comprehensively and in a more routinized manner as the modern, constantly changing working life alone requires it – not to mention other areas of life.

3. What is in Common to Love and Creativity?

3.1 Paradoxes

Love requires that two human beings become one and still remain as individuals. At the end, everyone has to lean just on oneself, as hard as it is (see Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003).

Roman Poet, Ovidius (1966), described one paradox of love already two-thousand years ago (43 BC-17 AD): *"I cannot live with you or without you"*. Excessive closeness and too much of a distance separate out and the high tide and low tide of love—the fluctuation of rapprochement and withdrawing—do not follow any predetermined pattern. There are several other paradoxal aspirations and dual messages. They all pose tensions to the hopes and promises set on love. The higher are expectations, the higher are disappointments.

Also creativity includes paradoxes. On the one hand, creativity is understood as an exceptional talent reached by only a few (see e.g., Lubinski et al., 2001). On the other hand, creativity is seen as a characteristic that covers everyone, as a sort of human ability (see Treffinger, 1986). Recent studies (see e.g., McWilliam, Dawson, & Tan, 2008) have shown that creative capacity building can be made visible and even translated into means that can be used in teaching and that constitute creative capacity. Indeed, the understanding about the nature of creativity has shifted from the quality of only the rare (Big "C") toward a necessity for all (Small "C") (McWilliam, Tan, & Dawson, 2010; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997).

3.2 The Connection between Suffering and Creativity and Love Lunacy

Love is foolery, have many of the earliest famous novelists said. Robert Burton (1963/1651) declared in the 17th century that love is not just lunacy but also *"sickness, fever, agony"* and describes quite in detail the world-shaking and negative effects that love has on both the individual people and the whole society. In this way, he shows his reverence to Francis Bacon who quite simply stated at the end of the 16th century that *"it is impossible to be in love and be wise"* (Bacon, 1955/1557). Bacon's thoughts are highly regarded in Shakespeare's plays as well.

Later on, the definitions of the nature of love and falling in love have been delivered more and more. Alberoni (1983) describes falling in love as assimilation, Tennov (1979) refers to limerence, whereas Girard (1972) talks about losing oneself, Fromm (1988) about the disappearance of individuality, Askew (1965) about neurosis, Kilpatrick (1974) about anti-socialization, De Rougement (1956) about orientation toward death, Burton (in 1651) about insanity, and Stendahl (in 1822) about crystallizing.

As an antithesis, love has been regarded as a divine phenomenon, a manifestation of immortality in the mortal people. Camus (1955) emphasizes the unifying power on which love is based: A human being is directed by the longing for the tranquility, eternity, and security of which falling in love consists. Sam Keen (1974) refers to love as motivation and energy. Erich Fromm (1988) considers love an active force. (See also Määttä, 1999.)

Creativity has also been associated with the mental problems, emotional instability, and neurotic personality (e.g., Kaufman, 2005; Prentky, 2000) as well as suffering (e.g., Ghadirian & Ghadirian, 2009). A Freudian conception of the reasons for creativity is based on the instincts and subconscious repressions of the psyche. The need for creation has been understood as an attempt to solve conflicts or to be enhanced by suffering. The motivation for creativity has been explained by numerous negative characteristics that describe insanity or derangement. (Guastello et al., 2004; Jamison, 1995; Uusikylä, 1992.)

The present views and research results, for their part, emphasize how creativeness is the most efficient with those whose personality is harmonious and stable. Creativity is the most productive with those whose personality consists of features such as independence, strength, optimism, inner-direction, and flexibility, tolerance of conflicts, energy as well as perseverance and goal-orientation. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 2000; Eysenck, 1993; Maslow, 1988.)

3.3 Merely Equal to Joy?

Many researchers connect the positive features with love and creativity. They are joy and pleasure. When Spinoza (1994/1677) sketched the illustration of a wise and rational life, he emphasized the meaning of love, joy, and happiness. They stand for growing perfection; whereas hate, fear, and disregard mean diminishing perfection.

(See Giacinto et al., 2007.) Creative activity includes pleasure as well. Finnish Author Anja Kauranen said in an interview that: *'I do not know whether I would write if it did not constantly include the feeling of freeing oneself, lightness, and delight.'* (see also Perrine & Brodersen, 2005.)

At its best, creativity manifests itself as a current, so-called experience of flow (see Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Flow is a top experience during which one is pulled in such a comprehensive way in the challenging performance that the consciousness of time and place blurs. The experience of flow occurs when the challenges of a task and the abilities of the individual are balanced. It refers to a state with enjoyable concentration and activity resulting in a productive and successful performance; whether it was the case of writing, wall creeping, playing chess, making a sculpture or surgery, or composing (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000.).

Engagement can be considered similar to flow (Siitonen, 1999). It refers to the fascination and passion of functioning or creating: When working at one's limits and experiencing inspiration, satisfaction, and the feelings of joy and delight, one is riveted by an interesting task: time disappears and hours turn into minutes. The positive experiences and perceived achievements form the germ of expertise. During the current, emotions are not only controlled and funneled, they are positive, filled with energy, and help accomplishing the task. Getting depressed or becoming distressed is the opposite of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000.)

Falling in love means pleasure, too; the emotions of pain and loneliness disappear as the fantasies and dreams appear, and the experiences of symbiosis strengthen. The awareness of 'We' and the feeling of completeness become more powerful. The English word for it is felicitous: 'to fall in love'. A human being falls or stumbles. One's own ego disappears and the emotion of falling in love is total. Nothing is normal or conventional. The consciousness of time and distance get lost: the feeling adheres infrangibly just like the concentration associated with the experience of flow.

On the other hand, suppressing an individual's creativity results in several negative consequences. A human being, whose presence and activity are being set too much of the terms, pressure, and stress, and who has to adjust within too strict limits, ends up behaving aggressively and destructive. Aggression is one of the negative consequences of creativity.

3.4 Tongue-in-Cheek

Creativity and love relate to humor and playfulness which can be considered human virtues as well (cf. Seligman et al., 2005). The experiences of realization and joking both exemplifies the ability to free one's mind and soul (see Burch et al., 2006). Curiosity, unchained creation, and spontaneity are peculiar to a child. They are also the source of creativity and love (e.g., Russ & Kaugars, 2000). Furthermore, according to Dewey (1991), the balance between playfulness and sobriety is the ideal of intellectuality.

A Swedish word for love, *"kär-lek [love-play]"* reveals the whole truth: love consists of love plays in which the playful behavior, being silly, and joyfulness bring laughter and delights to the life together. Love and playfulness belong together. Desmond Morris (1967) defined play as a voyage of exploration that enhances *"the atmosphere of wonder and curiosity; will to search and find and experiment."* In this way, play and playfulness can be connected to love, creativity, and joy, as well as to the delight of wonder and discovering something new. It is even alleged that all creativity rests on play (see Koivunen, 1997; Wolfradt & Pretz, 2001). From this point of view, also the playful behavior of those who are in love frees themselves to find the new characteristics from themselves and from other people, and at the same time, the charm of novelty and power of the feeling of falling in love strengthens.

Nor do laughter and being silly, coddling and love plays—childish behaviors—show any signs of subsiding even later in life. The seniors talk about getting younger when falling in love: how they would go to the chaplaincy's garden to steel some apples at the age of 80 and to eat ice cream sitting on the escalator of a shopping center. *"We were marveling ourselves how we became such the malicious brats", "one has to preen oneself as one was a young girl", "I am laughing with him all the time", or "I, a taciturn, straight-faced man, find myself laughing and chortling and putting the bad things in the background"*. (Määttä, 2005.) There are numerous examples of the fact how the age does not diminish the joy and playfulness of love. The age is forgotten: they just are and enjoy being spreading joy to everyone.

3.5 Bugger the Age

The previous chapter suggests that love and creativity are not conditional of age although the forms of love (Määttä, 2005) and creativity (see e.g., Hong & Milgram, 2010) change along with age. The ability to love and create is part of a human being even in later life because people do not lose their ability to love romantically along aging (Lang & Fingerman, 2004; Määttä, 2011). Both love and creative functioning satisfy our deepest

emotional needs regardless of age and are irreplaceable to the emotional and intellectual balance in this busy, performance-centered, and competitive culture of ours (see Simonton, 1989).

Thus, love and creativity do not retire, on the contrary. There are reasons to claim that people are born old and get younger as they age (Heinonen, 1988). When young, people embody the genetic heredity and lean on the given certainties and patterns whose durability and suitability have not been tested by experience. Along with age, the experiences increase and one's own special personality develops. Through the experiences, one undergoes a transformation and becomes younger. Jarmo Heinonen (1988, p. 40) stated: *'All that is ancient and inherited in him/her gives place to new.'*

Also creativity alters along with aging. The expressive creativity—spontaneity and originality—is that form of creativity that diminishes after childhood. It is replaced by the prosperous and productive creativity or possibly inventive creativity. (Taylor, 1988; Wolfradt & Pretz, 2001.)

In the history of art, there is a variety of examples of artists, composers, authors, film makers, and architects, who have created their best work in later life. Aino Rätty-Hämäläinen (1988) estimates that J.S. Bach's works of his old age are considered the most beautiful and that Giuseppe Verdi composed *Otello* at the age of 74 and the most daring of his operas, *Falstaff*, at the age of 80. Helene Schjerfbeck was an active creator until she was over 80 years old; likewise, Artist Rembrandt renewed and developed into more and more peculiar along with ageing. Nor do authors think that their writing is age-bound. Supposedly, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's talent of being a love lyricist still at the age of 80 stemmed from his powerful will to complete *Faust*. He sketched this work for six decades and maybe this goal lengthened his biological age. 90-year-old Finnish Movie-Director Tyyni Tulio thought that her creative power originated from the gift of not giving up: *"One has to have a goal that makes life meaningful and that is the secret of mental agility."*

3.6 A Matter of Will but Avoiding Duress

Love and creativity require also practicing and learning as well as testing the new boundaries. Are love and creativity, such as learning is, both merely working, after all? A love affair will not last automatically but sustaining it requires activeness, creativity, and sensitivity like any other success. Creativity is also disciplined working and vigilance. (Wang & Horng, 2002.) Just an inspiration or intuition will not be enough. The creative ideas are needed but they also have to be carried out and made visible, turned into action.

"The door to happiness opens outwards", Kierkegaard has noted (see Lehtinen, 1990) and thus, assures also of the significance of the acts of love, changing the positive emotions into actions and words. Even the smallest acts of love can spark the strong emotions. How to make the other radiate, what pleases the other one; stopping to think these questions may be a short-cut to happiness. At its best, making someone happy is rewarding, the emotion of excitement rubs off and shakes: *"she fills my heart with very special things, with angels' songs with wild imaginings, she fills my soul with so much love"* (Where Do I Begin).

The other side of the coin is that the activity and diligence will not necessarily advance satisfyingly. Although one had plenty of drive and belief, hope and industriousness, that all can move mountains, still love and creativity include solving constant conflicts, and non-stop molting and reproducing the experiences of real actuality. Creativity or love will not necessarily appear as desired, not by trying or by demanding. Love or creativity cannot be enhanced by forcing. Instead, one has to be intrinsically motivated to carry out these ideas as extrinsic motivation has been proven to have negative association with creativity (Prabhu, Sutton, & Sauser, 2008)—neither do compulsion or outer rewards guarantee genuine love (Gordon & Chen, 2010).

Venturing on the new dimensions belongs to love. In this sense, love is like art, notes Erich Fromm (1956). A human being enters the unknown world and has to do things differently than before and may find moving in the strange ground is frightening. Overcoming the fears and taking risks consist of *"self-discipline, concentration, overcoming one's own narcissism, mind, and humbleness"* (Fromm, 1956).

Creativity requires commitment, concentration, and devotion (Probst et al., 2007). Neither will love flourish if the partner's existence is ignored and considered self-evident (Gottman et al. 1998; Johnson et al., 1992). No one avoids setbacks and difficulties nor will creativity or love be discouraged by them. Even the failures provide resources if the difficulties and conflicts are tolerated without giving up immediately. If one is ready to search new views and better life that results from the misfortunes even in the situations that seem the most intolerable, the faith and will to survive and succeed will not be shaken. Sometimes, the problems are certainly so overwhelming that even the good efforts, abilities, or will do not help.

The will to alter and mold love, other people, and one's own life situation according to one's wishes is human. Creative activity and love require compromises, tolerance to conflicts as well as flexibility and bargaining, but

not excessively. Affinity leads easily to the subordination and exercise of power even though *“love should seek its own”*. Alberoni (1983) characterizes the compulsion to own the other one and the crisis it results in felicitously: *“We want to catch love like a butterfly into a net. But it cannot be captured or owned, because it is something living. Anything that lives cannot be captured without it losing some of its vividness. All that is chained dies slowly, loses its indigenoussness, and freshness.”* Neither love nor creativity live or flourish if chained. In addition, creativity consists of apparently stagnant, inactive periods (Beefink, van Eerde, & Rutte, 2008). It is not always possible to produce something visible that delights self or the others.

3.7 The Role of Imagination

“Love is the victory of the imagination over the brain” (May, 1969, p. 74) and *“creativity is the kingdom of imagination”* (Krippner & Dillard, 1988, p. 125). Several aphorisms emphasize how creativity and love constitute their own reality as they both require imagination.

Although other people and activities are real in love there are plenty of fantasies and false reality. Even in love, there is a phase when it does not appear how the eyes see it but how the mind experiences it. A human being constructs love to fit his or her hopes and ideals. Watzlavik (1974), for his part, describes love as *“a syndrome of utopia”*, which appears as a tendency to see love as a solution to everything although there is not any solution really. In love, one lives in a fallacy of unrealistic fantasies. Or is this actually the fascination of love: to strive for perfection that does not exist but in which one believes so deeply that one is ready to struggle over obstacles and seek something greater and more complete? Perhaps, it is that the illusion that makes one happy is not more insignificant than the truth that leads one back to earth. (Murray et al., 1996.)

When it comes to creativity, imagination has been considered a way of seeing, feeling and providing mystical strengths. Imagination consists of the conscious and unconscious interaction between the extrinsic and intrinsic experiences as well as the previous and present ones. Juho Hollo (1932) noted in 1932 that imagination is a special mental function along with the memory and reasoning. Imagination is the union between intelligence and emotion in which the ability to organize and unite mental pictures actively and passively is essential.

Reasoning and memory are needed for providing material for imagination and this material is shaped and changed by imagination, as a result of intuition and free production. The emotion is required to ignite and spark inspiration and spontaneity, whereas the reasoning and intellectual syntheses are needed for working and reshaping. (Gaut, 2003; Warnick, 1976.)

Breaking away from mannerism belongs to imagination; although a healthy imagination does not travel only in unreality but expands and completes the reality. Imagination is allocated to what is not yet or anymore, what is not present. Finnish Author Olli Jalonen (2000) describes his writing: *“at its best, it seems to include something like tiny parts from the future”*.

4. Conclusion: What Comes from the Heart, Sets off the Hearts

The survival of mankind and the development of our culture have always been built on the human ability to create and love. For this reason, it is reasonable to dispel the false notions that these essential features of a human being could not be addressed through research as well—in order to reveal, describe, analyze, and explain. This was the purpose of this article as well. Moreover, we suggest that modern scientists should pay attention to the interconnectedness of love and creativity as they form an important part of human wellbeing. How this linkage could be put to use, for example, in education?

Every human being and society need love to stay healthy. Additionally, the value of play, imagination, and creativity is priceless. The healthy development is not possible without love or the various forms of creativity. How to support the development of children’s creativity? Because of the connection between love and creativity, it seems reasonable to assume that a teacher who applies pedagogical love could foster students’ creativity regardless of the educational level. Pedagogical love provides a specific teaching attitude and shows in quite a concrete way that acting in the teaching profession as the core of pedagogical love consists of trust in pupils’ learning capacities and the desire to help pupils improve their abilities and talents (see Määttä & Uusiutti, 2011a, b).

Whereas Freud defined human mental health as the ability to love and work, the ability to creativity could be added to the features of mental health. Especially, the experience of flow and active searching for the sense of well-being within creativity enhances development into the top level. Human beings’ aspiration to constantly improve their skills is at least partly due to the wish to keep track of the current or to strive for higher levels of well-being (Diener, Lucas, & Napa Scollon, 2006).

Furthermore, the interconnectedness of love and creativity should be paid attention to in working life as well.

Uusiautti's (2008) research revealed some encouraging results concerning success at work. In her research, top workers had experienced love for their work but also considered creative traits, for example in the form of proactive way of working, important as well (see also Uusiautti & Määttä, 2010a; 2010b).

Is love creativity and creativity love, then? Yes, they are, but not just that. Love is not just creativity. It is serious and important to all of us as well as a bruising, touching, and developing emotional and learning experience that opens new views—as do creative processes and actions. In addition, creativity needs love in order to stay live; whereas love needs creativity in order to stay attracting. When it comes to love and creativity, it seems that what comes from the heart sets off the hearts.

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