

Deconstructing the Beauty of Love Language from Fromm's and Rumi's Perspective

Iram Amjad¹

Abstract

This study explored the ways in which Eric Fromm (1900-1980) and Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207-1273) theorize love language as an ontological and practical centripetal force and inquired about their convergence offering contemporary world reflections of isolation, alienation, commodification, and fragile emotional attachments. By employing philosophical and theoretical hermeneutics approach grounded in Gadamer's (2006) fusion of horizons along with Braun and Clarke's (2024) reflexive thematic analysis of primary texts (Fromm's *The Art of Loving* and *To Have or To Be?* And Rumi's *Mathnawi* and *Divan-i Shams* in English translation), the study compared the two thinkers across seven analytical dimensions. Despite different lexical choices, one adopted a psychoanalytic-humanist approach and the other more of a Sufi-theistic approach. But both thinkers treated love as the response to human separation, a paradox of union lacking erasure of difference, a disciplined practice rather than a passive sentiment, a counterforce to the possessive, market-driven disposition, and an ethic that ranged afar the beloved to the humanity all together. There was a clear manifestation of similarity in their philosophy of love despite the East and the West cultural gap as well as the centuries' gap between the two, while some divergences related to eventuality of love purpose and the status of the self in union were also identified. The study proposed a Love-as-a-practice convergence model that systematically connects Eastern mystical and Western humanistic traditions. This study offered textual resources for comparative religious philosophy, spiritual studies, psychology of human connections, and intercultural dialogue. It is hoped that the study makes its readers aware of the experiential value of love in the postmodern world which is full of paradoxes.

Article History

Received 05 August 2026
Revised 10 October 2026
Accepted 11 October 2026
Published 11 October 2026

OPEN ACCESS

Keywords

Art of Loving, Comparative Philosophy, Hermeneutics, Love Language, Paradox of love, Sufism

Introduction

"Love's state is apart from religion and faith; God is the Lover's religion – God is the lover's state"

(Rumi, *Mathnawi*, as cited in Schimmel, 1994, p. 15).

"Real love is not a sentiment which can be easily indulged in by anyone"

(Fromm, 1957, p. vii).

¹ Dr. Iram Amjad is an Assistant Professor, English (Linguistics), FAST National University of Computer and Emerging Sciences, Lahore, Pakistan. Email: iramamjad7@gmail.com ; iram.amjad@nu.edu.pk ; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5088-2414>

Among the plethora of literature available on the subject of love, the present study offers testimonies to love language prevalent in both the Western and Eastern culture with respect to Fromm and Rumi. The virtue of love and its affectionate expression comprises a multiplicity of feelings and conditions that array from interpersonal affection and pleasure to mystic love (Fromm, 1956 & Safi, 2009). Love in its various forms has the cardinal value for the postmodern man's life. It is an impulse and value that remains beyond the market. In the postmodern world, it has become even more precious, and it is beyond price when material things have become man's sole object of love.

The philosophical argument concerning love plausibly initiates with questions regarding its nature. Love as a manifestation of feeling comprising a passionate connection to an object must involve interaction between lover and the beloved. Since love also becomes the exact sign in the traditional sense of the ecstasy and beatitude of the transcendent world, this study is an attempt to expound the link between love and knowledge. Nonetheless, though dealing with words and notions, writing about love can stir a definite consciousness in the mind and soul, thereby causing the reader and the researcher to practice love on a certain level. Love cannot be condensed to mere depiction, but it may arouse some feeling of love existing within the individual's soul.

Problem Statement and Context

Contemporary social theorists (Bauman, 2003; Illouz, 2007) describe the modern world as a place where intimate bonds have become increasingly provisional and market-mediated. Bauman (2003) exemplifies modern-day attachments and emotions as "liquid", easily entered and easily abandoned. Illouz (2007) demonstrates how consumer capitalism shapes the very language in which romantic love is fantasied and enacted. In such an environment, love is frequently condensed to a private feeling or a consumable experience. The two thinkers are separated by an estimated seven centuries and greatly diverse intellectual worlds. Fromm was a German-American psychoanalyst and a social philosopher, and Jalal al-Din Rumi was a thirteenth-century Persian Sufi poet; nonetheless, both resist this reduction. Each philosopher asserted that love is a demanding and transformative universal reality rather than an emotional sentiment.

The present study aims to explore the concept of love and its importance in the views of Fromm and Rumi. Despite their different perceptions due to geo-historical divisions as well as varied language and social backgrounds, there is clear evidence of overlap in their philosophy of love. This study forms a comparative analysis of Fromm and Rumi's perspectives by deconstructing the beauty of love.

Research Gap

Scholarship on Rumi has been mainly developed within Persian Literature, Islamic mysticism and Esoteric Islam (Chittick, 1983; Lewis, 2000; Schimmel, 1978), whereas studies on Fromm have been contextualised mainly in critical theory, psychoanalysis, and human psychology (Burston, 1991; Funk, 1982). Accordingly, these two bodies of work are seldom placed in sustained and systematic dialogic discourse. This comparison addresses this gap by conducting a thematic analysis while structuring around explicit analytical categories.

Research Questions

This study is guided by three questions:

1. How do Fromm and Rumi conceive of the nature, source, and purpose of love language?
2. Where do Fromm's and Rumi's accounts converge and diverge, once their diverse metaphysical commitments are taken into account?
3. How do the convergent insights contribute to understanding and addressing the

paradoxes of love language in a commodified and individualistic age?

Contributions

The study provides a transparent hermeneutic-comparative method for interpreting philosophies of a Western psychoanalytic-humanist and an Eastern mystical thinker side by side. It also provides a seven-dimension comparative framework (as shown in Table 1) that makes convergences and divergences categorically explicit for other scholars. It contributes to the Love-as-a-Practice Convergence Model, which is formulated as five propositions having implications for theory, education, intercultural dialogue and harmony.

This study is significant as it gives the semantic value of love in detail and how this, as a virtue, can be used to cure and neutralise its own negative impact in the form of greed, jealousy, lust and anger – the deadly sins of the postmodern world. It is hoped that the study makes its readers aware of the experiential value of love in the postmodern world, which is full of paradoxes including repudiation and egotism, avariciousness and sublimation, infatuation and fidelity. The next section reviews theories of love language and sets out the background for the conceptual framework.

Literature Review

In its philosophical orientations, the nature of love revolved around the explanation of the theoretical distinction between goodness, the second self and the Lover-Beloved distinction. A number of theories endeavour to elaborate on the idea of love, and the function it tends to serve. It is not easy to define love to a conjectural person who had not practiced love or being loved. Some psychological theories, for example Sternberg's (1986) triangular theory, explain love as a combination of intimacy, passion and commitment. Other theories regard romantic love as an evolutionary psychological adaptation that enables pair bonding and the care of the offspring (Fisher, 2004). There are also mystical traditions that regard love as a gift from God (Chittick, 1983).

Theoretical Perspectives on Love

Mostly, love is predominantly a form of need, inclination, or passion. The power of love is unequalled and unsurpassed in itself, and its strength emanates within one's soul. Sometimes, the problem also looms behind the power of love. If you love entities unreasonably, then it develops into greed. If you love yourself excessively, it converts into egocentrism. The feeling of love is lurking beneath other emotions, that is, jealousy, greed, lust or anger. The pain of love is very familiar in the human dominion. All human accomplishments are linked to love, and all difficulties are emblems of the renunciation of the supremacy of love. In fact, love is indispensable to transmuting and therapeutic power.

Amid the varied aspects of Western culture, the notion of love has been influenced by the Greeks, who focused on the creative analysis of love. The later Christian tradition and theories of *agape* and *eros* distinguish between divine and human love. But for Sufis, there is no clear-cut distinction between the two, as *eros* (passionate love) shadows the *agape* (selfless love).

Aristotle (2009) is of the view that lover has a temporary existence and the beloved is eternal. Socrates finds love as a best help to man and Plato consider love as a desire of the good (Moseley, 2001). From the Petrarch's came the rhetorical foundations of romantic love for the modern world. Together with romantic love there was a skeptical French tradition in the form of Stendhal's (1822/1975) crystallization theory. It propounded creative eagerness for love (Singer, 2009; Stendhal, 1822/1975). Furthermore, Proust (1913/2003) singled out

nonexistence and proposed jealousy to be essential precipitants of love (Proust, 1913/2003).

For Hindus, love is the first and the last order and decree to the early times of Vedas. Swami Nisargadatta, an Indian mystic equated love with life and the existence of one is not possible without the other because “love is life and life is love” (as cited in Chopra, 1997, p. 12).

From the perspective of Islam and early Christianity, all worldly love should not separate from the love of God, and any love that ignores God ruins the soul of man. The mystics have affirmed that true love is the love for the divine and all other love as allegorical. True love has existential roots and the virtual love is human love between man and women. According to Jafari (2005), the real love is actually the “Settling in the attraction of perfection toward divinity, the real love directs its owner through the desire of seeking perfection to the gravity of absolute perfection” (p. 170). The ultimate truth or reality lies in the love for God. The nature of life abounds in love and beauty is a consequence of life (Khan, 1999, p. 18). God ushers love and He becomes the source of love; so true love in the world is eventually the love for God. Hence, love is a universally acknowledged phenomenon whose ultimate purpose is the fulfillment of life.

Even words lack the capacity to define or analyze love. Nevertheless, words can in some way be used to express the indescribable. Palmquist (2008) aptly said that love is not a mathematical formula but one must try to learn to be grappled by love.

Fromm’s Theory of Love as an Art

In *The Art of Loving*, Fromm (1956/1957) argues that love is not primarily a temptation or a pleasant sensation to be “fallen into” but a capability that must be cultivated just like an art, through care, responsibility, respect, knowledge. Its inception is the existential problem of human solitude that has emerged from three discrete experiences: natural union with nature, human experiences about isolation and fretfulness, and obligation of finding a way to overcome it. Fromm (1957) differentiates mature love from various pseudo-solutions, which includes orgiastic states, conformity to the people, and symbiotic or sadomasochistic fusion. By contrast, mature love preserves veracity and individuality, and is expressed through four interrelated elements such as care, responsibility, respect, knowledge. It appears in five forms, which includes brotherly and motherly affection, passion, self-love, and love of God, of which brotherly love provide the basic foundation for love as an emotion. In his later work, Fromm (1976) contrasts the mode of existence where people relate to the world as material possessions with the being mode, in which they connect through a sense of liveliness and sharing. In this way, he links the market-driven modern capitalism to the erosion of true love.

Rumi and the Sufi Path of Love

For Rumi love (*ishq*) is neither a psychosomatic state nor a literary convention but the enlivening principal of existence and the mode of knowing the most acceptable to the Divine. Chittick (1983) shows that in Rumi’s philosophical teaching, the fractional, calculating intellect is limited in its understanding of God, while love, ignited by the divine attraction, devours the lover’s ego-centric emotional attachments. The opening of the *Mathnawi* (also known as *Mesnevi*, which is a poetic form in rhymed couplets where each verse rhymes freely and independently) in which the reed flute wails its parting from the reed-bed, establishes the central image of desire, yearning, and exile (Nicholson, 1966). Rumi’s own transformation

occurred after his encounter with Shams Tabrizī, an Iranian *dervish* (Persian mystic who is member of Muslim religious order), a spiritual seeker, and a poet in 1244 who shaped poetics, in which human and divine love interpenetrate (see also Schimmel, 1978; Lewis, 2000). It is, therefore obvious that Rumi does not offer a theory of love as the Western analytical tradition proposes but as the one that adopts an enlivening and a poetic path of grief, anguish, self-annihilation (*fana*), and subsistence in God (*baqa*). Thus, this path moves and strips the spiritual seeker away from the worldly, egoistic attachments and self-centered desires to complete transformation of consciousness that sees human life, will, and their actions as sustained and completely guided by the Divine.

Contemporary Psychosocial Perspectives on Love

Contemporary scholarship approaches love from complementary viewpoints ranging between intimate passion and commodified entity to cognitive action and ethical practice. Sternberg (1986) exemplifies love as a trio of intimacy, passion, and commitment highlighting that its forms differ in balancing these components. Nussbaum (2001) argues that feelings of love are evaluative judgments about matters related to human prosperity carrying cognitive and moral content. Bauman (2003) and Illouz (2007) provide a critical social view of the emotional connections which get faded by the market-oriented logics and consumer behavior and choices. In addition, Hooks (2000) drew explicitly on Fromm by reframing love as an action-oriented goal and an ethical path of care, trust, integrity, and commitment rather than feeling alone. These aspects display a growing consent that love is a socially situated practice, a philosophical claim around which Fromm and Rumi converge.

Methodology

In order to explore the nature of love and its potential importance in the postmodern world, the present study adopts a hermeneutic approach that draws on Fromm's notion of "rational mysticism" (Fromm, 1957). Hermeneutics is an approach to interpretation (Hermeneutics, 2015, p. 13). It is used to analyze spirituality with respect to its three premises: there is an invariant reality/consciousness where all things are situated under the umbrella of the changing world reality, this reality forms the core of human soul and that the man's goal is to experience reality with the consciousness of God as one's real quintessence. The non-dualistic philosophy encompasses nearly all the spiritual traditions; Sufism (Islam) and Gnosticism and mysticism (Early Christianity). The mystical current underlying Fromm and Rumi's work is unified through this non-dualistic strand (Tolle, 2005 & Underhill, 1955). In hermeneutics, the socio-historical and cultural contextualization cannot be ignored (Fromm, 1957 & Chittick, 2000). Hence, the fusion of horizons which forms the background knowledge or presuppositions become crucial for understanding the nature of love alongside the metaphysical dimensions of man's life (e.g., Fromm, 1957). The study approaches love as a reality or consciousness of postmodern human being and an intrinsic kind of *art* or *practice*. The foremost kind of treatment of love implies that consciousness leads man to practice the "right action" which then becomes the essence of one's soul. The other one implies that love as an *art* is man's fundamental potential which is nurtured through *practice* (Fromm, 1957). Using this philosophical exploration of love as a basis, a comparative study will elaborate Fromm and Rumi's conception of love.

Conceptual Framework

This comparative study is structured around three important analytical lenses. First, is the ontological lens that inquired about the nature and origin of love. Second, is the practical-ethical lens that examined the ways in which love is cultivated and what different obligations it created. Third, is the social critical lens, which questions about the elements being opposed by love in the social order and what it offered as therapy. These lenses are methodologically operationalized through seven analytical dimensions (as shown in Table 1) that were applied identically to both the thinkers, which eliminates the challenge of reading one tradition through the categories of other. Also, this would not even result in overriding each tradition's interpretations about love.

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative approach based on comparative textual analysis of love language. Hermeneutics is not used here as loose label for "interpretation" but as a rigorous method of analysis. By following Gadamer (2006), understanding arises when the interpreter's own philosophical horizon converges with that of a text and the purpose is the fusion of horizons rather than the neutral meaning as its explanation. By considering Ricoeur (1976), interpretation swings between structural explanation and appropriation of the text according to reader's own contextual background.

The Data

The primary data comprised significant works by Fromm and Rumi. The selected texts of Fromm included *The Art of Loving* (1956) and *To Have or To Be?* (1976), and *Psychoanalysis and Religion* (1950), and for Rumi, *Mathnawi* and the selected lyrical poetry of *Divan-e Shams-e Tabrizi* as rendered in the cited translations. These texts were selected because of three reasons namely a) They address the theme of love explicitly, b) These are central to each philosopher's reception, and c) These are available in authoritative edition, which are widely published book versions. Further, the secondary literature was only used for contextualization but not to replace the primary readings.

Analytical Procedure

The data analysis was carried in four phases. Figure 1 illustrates the analytical framework for comparative thematic analysis. Phase 1 gives the author's pre-understanding about the concept of love, Eastern and Western philosophical traditions. Phase 2 is a much closer extractions of texts containing passages giving an explicit account of love. In Phase 3, following the reflexive thematic coding of Braun and Clarke (2024), all extracts were inductively coded and then consolidated into seven dimensions as detailed in Table 1. Phase 4 is about comparative fusion where the coded texts for the two philosophers were juxtaposed dimension-wise and convergences and divergences were noted. Subsequently, these claims about language of love were tested against the wider scholarship.

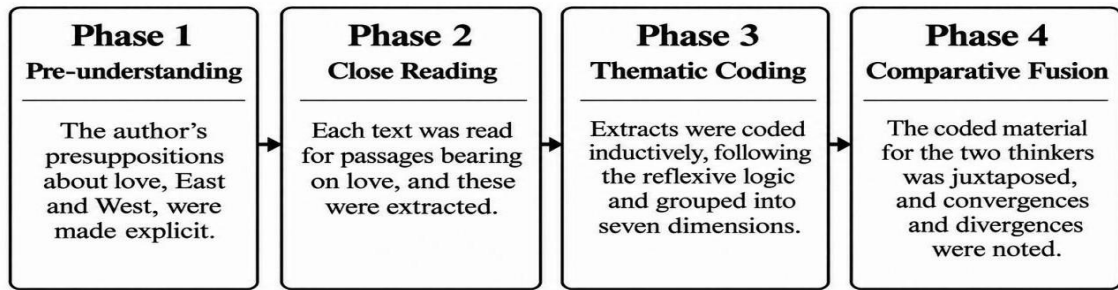


Figure 1. Four-Phase Framework for Comparative Thematic Analysis

Reflexivity, Rigor, and Limits of Translation

To maintain trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), the study kept an audit track of textual passages that were coded, attended to refuting evidential accounts in the form of divergences, and consulted more than one translation or authoritative version for significant Rumi's philosophical texts. As Rumi is read mostly in English translation, shades of the Persian are inevitably mediated and important Sufi concepts and lexemes such as *ishq* (Divine love), *fana* (Annihilation), *baqa* (Eternal subsistence in God), *nafs* (The Self or Ego) are therefore glossed, inferred, and understood with reference to Chittick (1983). The author's own cultural position is admitted as part of the interpretive horizon.

Analysis and Discussion

Love is a centripetal force for the human race. It liquefies all digressions and deviations. That is why for Rumi, love is like a clandestine energy beyond the metaphysical and the physical world. It has an extraordinary power which can tie disparate objects together and fix all the clashes among men. Love creates all the positive vibes and connections between the particles of the universe. Each and every atom and molecule depends on the welfare of every other thing existing in the universe. Rumi believed that love stimulates feelings and upsurges the supremacy of intuition in order to make one more insightful. As compared to intellect, love is supreme in its power. In a nutshell, for the sustenance of cosmic reality, Rumi affirms the dynamic power of love to interconnect mankind with the natural world. He says:

"My Mother is Affection

My Father is Warmth

My Prophet is dearest

My God is Love

I am a child of Adoration

I have arisen only to express Love" (as cited in Jason, 2009)

Rumi states that love is at the heart of the universe which connects everyone beyond religion. We find repercussions of this understanding in Fromm's *The Art of Loving* who propounded that love makes everything in this universe more pleasant: *"When we are in Love, the world seems sweeter, more beautiful and more magnificent. That's the reason when someone falls in love s/he falls in love with everything and everyone around him or her"* (cf. Ozdemir, 2013). Furthermore, love can resolve all existential crises. He

found that sexual fusion and social belongingness are of trivial nature as compared to the divine communion. Just like Rumi, Fromm valued love that keeps all the clan as well as the society interrelated and interconnected. He argued that the incapacity to love leads to insanity and demolition of self as well as the destruction of others (Moore, 2014, p. 79).

Love has a transformational power and exuberance and Sufism is called as the creed of love. It transforms the seeker during the journey through purification of disintegrated soul. Rumi propounded the philosophical nature of love by saying that the moment one falls in love heaven is attained and hatred and animosity throw straight into hell (Shafak, 2010). So, for Rumi love is God's quality through which man's is freed from the physical limitations of the material world (cf. Chittick, 2005, p. 10). In analytically studying what Rumi practiced, Fromm proposed that in the postmodern materialistic world, love can suggest solutions to the worldwide problems where it is not taken as a social connector rather treated in a highly individualistic and marginal way. There are multiple forms of love but the source is one that is God. Actually the postmodern man has fallen prey to consumerism which has commodified him and these social forces are in clash with love. Man's only target is cost-effective exchange of knowledge and thinks of himself as "personality package" to be profitably exchanged with others. Money is his God and satisfaction comes only through unlimited possessions. He has estranged from his own identity as well as from other men. It is because of this very reason that Bruckner (2012) highlighted the paradoxical nature of love in the postmodern world. Accordingly, *"as if love were a disease and we had to drop everything else to cure ourselves of it, as if we had to excuse ourselves for loving the way we do"* (Bruckner, 2012, p. 4). With this emerges, the most fundamental problem of lonesomeness and alienation and Fromm advised love to serve as a cure for human separateness. Love should not be a separable entity from societal forces and believed in creating a union in some form or with the world outside. The postmodern man sought refuge in romantic love and marriage which are considered as temporary or emergency solutions to loneliness. It is contrary to Fromm's account of true affection, which encompasses deliberate promise heading for a single exclusive individual. The true love is only achieved when all the mankind including the personal self is loved. Even Drigotas et al. (1999) similarly showed that close relationships are not sustained by feeling alone. By the "Michelangelo phenomenon", the affirmation of the ideal self by the partner through behavior fosters growth, and this sculpting is related to greater personal and relational well-being. It resembles Fromm's understanding that true love is not a feeling to be indulged, but an ability to love that is developed and cultivated through discipline and care. It is actually evolving one's disposition to tender one's neighbor with meekness, audacity, conviction and discipline that one attains the capacity to experience real love. However, when dealing with the resolution of these multiple paradoxes and conflicts, Rumi advocates love to act as antidote or remedy. For Rumi, the material world was never an illusion of any kind. It served as a cover through which man can perceive God. As Rumi puts it *"I have seen that the two worlds are. He is the External and He is the Internal"* (Nicholson, 1966, p. 45). The material world is in a way manifestation of the Eternal divine reality because

*"God hath blended the sandy earth,
A draught of Splendor from His Special beaker"* (Nicholson, 1966, p. 47)

All parts of the earth are interrelated and there is no speculation of fragmentation according to mystical thought of Rumi.

A paradoxical thought underlies both Fromm's and Rumi's philosophical tendencies of love. Rumi's paradox of love, lover and beloved leads to the ultimate discovery of man's way to the Divine. The notion of true love and derivative love transport the readers to the idea that love is the core of Divine and thereby the cause for God's creation. To love the love which is God is to become one with the beloved. He writes "*Love is the guide to the Divine*" (Nicholson, 1966, Book I, lines, 109–111).

The concept of true love and its offshoots lead to the idea that love is the very guide to the Divine. Rumi writes:

"Whether love be from this (earthly) side or from that (heavenly) side, In the end it leads us yonder" (Nicholson, 1966, Book I, line 111)

He describes love as "*the astrolabe of God's mysteries*" (Book I, line 110). Earthly love is thus not opposed to divine love but a path toward it. While when Fromm talks about the love paradox, it manifests in "two beings become one and yet remain two" (Fromm, 1957, p. 16). For him this is the case in mature love where union is achieved between the lover and beloved while retaining each of their exclusivity. This further includes the concepts of the love of God along with the erotic love because an individual reaches God's love with a certain degree of maturity of which Rumi experientially elaborates the beauty of love.

The discussion above first retained the original close reading of both philosophers' thinking and then conducted a comparative thematic analysis around seven analytical dimensions ranging from parallel description to explicit comparison as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparative Thematic Analysis of Fromm's and Rumi's Love Language

Linguistic Dimension	Fromm	Rumi	Convergence / Divergence
Nature of love	A productive orientation and a learnable capacity (care, responsibility, respect, knowledge), not an object-dependent feeling	<i>Ishq</i> as a cosmic, animating force and the substance of the path to God	Convergence: love as capacity and force rather than passing emotion
Root problem	Existential separateness and the anxiety of isolation	Exile from the Source (the reed cut from its reed-bed)	Convergence: alienation is the human predicament, voiced in psychological versus metaphysical idioms
False solutions	Orgiastic states, conformity, symbiotic union, the marketing orientation	Bondage to the lower self (<i>nafs</i>), worldly appetite, partial intellect	Convergence in critiquing self-serving substitutes for love
Union and paradox	Two beings become one and yet remain two	Union with the Beloved through passing away (<i>fana</i>) and subsistence (<i>baqa</i>)	Partial convergence: Fromm safeguards individuality; Rumi's mysticism dissolves ego-boundaries yet restores the self in subsistence
Love as practice	An art demanding discipline, concentration, patience and supreme concern	A path (<i>tariqa</i>) of longing, suffering, remembrance and companionship with a guide	Convergence on discipline; divergence in spiritual and institutional form
Scope and object	Brotherly love as the basis; extends to self, erotic partner and God	The Beloved is ultimately God; creation is His manifestation	Convergence on universal, non-exclusive love; divergence on the ultimate referent
Social role	Remedy for consumerist alienation and the having mode	Dissolves sectarian and social divisions	Convergence: love as a unifying, socially transformative force

Love as an Ontological Concept and an Answer to separateness

Both philosophers commence with the same predicament, though the language is slightly different. According to Fromm (1957), the most intense human need is to overcome separation, and the failure to do so produces feelings of disappointment, shame, anxiety, and guilt. For Rumi, the lament of being cut from reed-bed expressed the human soul's exile from its Divine Source (Nicholson, 1966). Fromm's language is existential and psychological in nature, and Rumi's is metaphysical, which goes beyond the physical world. It is worthwhile noting the structural parallel where one finds alienation as a starting point and love is the culmination point, as it reflects movement of return. This dimension reflects the nature and purpose of love, as both thinkers gave an account of love language that is not an accessory feeling but the response to the most fundamental detail of human existence.

False solutions and the critique of the having orientation

Fromm's critique of market-driven love in which individuals experience themselves as a commodified entity bearing a mode (Fromm, 1941, 1976) finds an Eastern counterpart in Rumi's admonitions against passion (*nafs*) and to worldly taste. Both identify the same pathology of self-transformation as well as of others into material objects of possession having an exchange value. They also suggested love as the antidote and cure for all human beings. Most importantly, Rumi does not condemn the material nature of world as such, as noted earlier, the world works as a veil through which the Divine is perceived. This peculiarity parallel's Fromm's denial to dismiss physical world, since what he criticizes is the orientation of having rather than the presence of things in reality. Thus, convergence is one part of this orientation and something not related to asceticism. This dimension then gets linked to the social critical lens in a commodified culture where both philosophers treat love as resistance.

Union, Paradox, and the status of the Self

A critical insight shows that this convergence is real but fractional. Fromm's paradox is anthropological: two independent and separate individuals unify without losing their integrity, in contrast with the symbiotic union he condemns. On the other hand, Rumi's paradox is metaphysical: the lover's passing away (*fana*) the ego and self before the Beloved is followed by subsistence (*baqa*) in God. In this way, restoration of the self takes place in a transfigured form (Chittick, 1983). The shared arrangement is thus a movement from loss of an egoistic individual self to a fuller and mature selfhood. The only difference lies in what the self actually unites with, that is, a human other or humanity versus The Divine and finally how the ego-boundary is radically dismantled and liquefied. After recognizing this, it halts the interpreters to think of the two philosophers as saying the same thing, thereby, strengthening the comparative claim by manifesting where convergence stops.

Love as Practice and Disciplinary Path

For Fromm, love is actually an art whose mastery entails care, responsibility, respect, knowledge. The question that arises is not how to be loved but how to develop the capacity of love (Fromm, 1957). Likewise, Rumi's tradition presents love as a path (*tariqa*) that is walked with recollection of memories, training of the self, pain and grief in longing, and in many accounts, comradeship with a spiritual guide just like Shams (Schimmel, 1978). Both thinkers out rightly reject spontaneous and effortless love without any suffering. This convergence is in line with contemporary arguments that love is understood as an ethical

action of commitment than as a feeling (Hooks, 2000). This supports the study's third premise that love is nurtured through practice.

Universal Scope of Love and its Communicative Function

Both philosophers refuse to accept that love can be restricted to a single emotional connection. Fromm is of the view that a love, which is directed at one individual while excluding the rest of the world is a symbiotic attachment and a form of an inflated ego, rather than genuine love. While Rumi envisions love as a phenomenon that transcends creed by making it similar to the universality and applicability of love in religious terminology. Both agree to the social role of love. According to them, love is a coalescing force that disbands divisions, whether it is the market-driven separations that Fromm diagnoses or the dogmatic and sectarian separations that Rumi's lyrical poetry surpasses. From Sternberg's (1986) perspective, commitment is treated as one small fragment of love and both the philosophers have widened the scope of commitment afar the dyad to a vow and an obligation to life and humanity itself.

Divergences and Tensions

There are three divergences that hold significant value. First, is the ultimate referent (God): Rumi's love is theistic and eventually directed to God, whereas Fromm reinterprets religious language anthropocentrically, understanding God as the symbol of the highest human potential (Fromm, 1950). Second, is the social problem identification: Fromm's critique is historically particular to industrial consumer capitalism, whereas Rumi writes within a pre-modern religious universe, where commodification is not addressed as such. Thus, any connection between them is a retrospective hermeneutic bridge and not considered a historical influence. Third, is the discursive style: Fromm writes in an analytical and prescriptive manner, while Rumi composes in a poetic and experiential way, so that the same insight is presented as a technique in one and as a euphoric event in another. Acknowledging these divergences makes this comparative study more reliable and set clear boundaries for the convergences.

Love-as-a-Practice Convergence Model

By drawing on the dimensions, the thematic analysis provides five propositions.

P1 – Ground: Love responds to human experiences of isolation and exile.

P2 – Paradox: Mature love unifies without annihilating difference despite the variance in degree and object of union.

P3 – Practice: Love is a disciplined capacity or path towards commitment and not a spontaneous emotion.

P4 – Critique: Love opposes the having and commodifying positioning towards self, others, and the rest of the world.

P5 – Scope: Love, by its very nature outspreads towards humanity at large and, for Rumi, the Divine.

Together, these five propositions support the study's premise by specifying what converges and what does not, and they provide a conceptual framework that other researchers can test against other valuable philosophers (e.g., Plato, Kahlil Gibran, Ibn Arabi, Meister Eckhart, Simone Weil, and Simone de Beauvoir).

Implications

The four-phase thematic analytical framework reflects that a mystic-poet and a humanistic psychoanalytic explanation of love can be productively compared without dissolving the boundaries of differences they carry, thereby contributing to comparative philosophical traditions and intercultural harmony, and inter-faith dialogic conversation. It also highlights contemporary practice-based approaches to love rooted in both Eastern and Western traditions (Hooks, 2000; Nussbaum, 2001). Considering practical aspects, this study may play an important role in counselling and relationships education. The shared emphasis on love as a nurturing capacity suggests curricula that teach care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge as skills rather than treating love as an inexplicable condition. For cultural and educational policies, the convergence points provide a shared vocabulary for dialogue between Eastern, Western, and Muslim-majority societies, specifically when public discourse puts emphasis on civilizational difference.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is interpretive and does not support empirical generalised claims. It focuses on the English translations of Rumi, treats only two philosophers, and their selected primary texts. Future researchers could extend the analytical framework to explore other thinkers such as Plato, Kahlil Gibran, Ibn Arabi, Meister Eckhart, Simone Weil, and Simone de Beauvoir. They could compare the Persian originals alongside Fromm in a collaborative project with Persian language experts. In addition, they could also empirically test the five propositions through interviews or surveys that investigate whether practice-oriented notions of love are linked with relationship outcomes in different cultures.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Data availability

All analyzed texts are published works cited in references.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from the above discussion that although there is a difference of centuries yet same philosophical realization of love is found in both of them. Rumi uses different metaphysical and poetic imagery to express love, for example by comparing love to a reed cut from its reed bed, while Fromm uses psychology and everyday language to express love as a learned capacity. Both believed that love is the unifying force for the gaps created by the socio-religious conflicts between the East and the West. For them love does not want divisions and it resolves all incongruities and brings the mankind to one unified platform beyond the geo-cultural divisions. The journey begins with the self and then all the positivity purifies the heart and one is left with love. Love bears no tags or imparities and its benedictions are intended for all whether it is the East or the West.

The study has demonstrated that both thinkers regard love as the most important response to human separateness, and that their views are paradoxical, practice-oriented, critical and broad in scope while differing in the ultimate object of love and the degree of

radical ego-dissolution. From the converging viewpoints, it is possible to construct a viable alternative to one of the versions of the 'commodification of intimacy' thesis. The 'love as practice' convergence provides a foundation for further comparative analysis. To conclude, Fromm and Rumi show that 'the language of love' is more of a practice than a vocabulary, a practice that requires learning, performing and empowering others to perform it.

References

- Aristotle. (2009). *The Nicomachean ethics* (D. Ross, Trans.; L. Brown, Rev.). Oxford University Press. (Original work published ca. 350 BCE)
- Bauman, Z. (2003). *Liquid love: On the frailty of human bonds*. Polity Press.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2024). Supporting best practice in reflexive thematic analysis reporting in *Palliative Medicine: A review of published research and introduction to the Reflexive Thematic Analysis Reporting Guidelines* (RTARG). *Palliative Medicine*, 38(6), 608-616. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02692163241234800>
- Bruckner, P. (2012). *The Paradox of Love*. Princeton University Press.
- Burston, D. (1991). *The Legacy of Erich Fromm*. Harvard University Press.
- Chittick, W. C. (1983). *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*. State University of New York Press.
- Chittick, W. C. (2000). *Sufism: A beginner's guide*. Oneworld.
- Chittick, W. C. (2005). *The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi*. (Illustrated ed.) World Wisdom.
- Chopra, D. (1997). *The path to love: Renewing the power of spirit in your life*. Harmony Books.
- Drigotas, S., Rusbult, C., Wieselquist, J., & Whitton, S. (1999). Close Partner as Sculptor of the Ideal Self: Behavioral Affirmation and the Michelangelo Phenomenon. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77(2), 293-323. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.77.2.293>
- Fisher, H. (2004). *Why we love: The nature and chemistry of romantic love*. Henry Holt.
- Fromm, E. (1941). *Escape from Freedom*. Farrar & Rinehart.
- Fromm, E. (1950). *Psychoanalysis and Religion*. Yale University Press.
- Fromm, E. (1957). *The Art of Loving*. London: George Allen & Unwin. (Original work published 1956).
- Fromm, E. (1976). *To Have or To Be?* Harper & Row.
- Funk, R. (1982). *Erich Fromm: The Courage to Be Human*. Continuum.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (2006). *Truth and Method*. (J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall, Trans. 2nd rev. ed.). Continuum.
- Hermeneutics. (2015). In R. Mir, H. Willmott, & M. Greenwood (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy in Organization Studies*. Routledge. <https://www.routledge.com/The-Routledge-Companion-to-Philosophy-in-Organization-Studies/Mir-Willmott-Greenwood/p/book/9781032477275>
- Hooks, B. (2000). *All About Love: New Visions*. William Morrow.
- Illouz, E. (2007). *Cold intimacies: The making of emotional capitalism*. Polity Press.
- Jafari, A. M. T. (2005). *Positive Mysticism*. Allameh Jafari Institute.
- Jason, E. (2009). My favourite Rumi. <http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/H%20%20World%20Religions%20and%20Poetry/Poetry/Rumi/My%20Favorite%20Rumi/My%20Favorite%20Rumi.pdf>
- Khan, H. I. (1999). *The Heart of Sufism: Essential writings of Hazrat Inayat Khan*. Shambala Publication.

- Lewis, F. D. (2000). *Rumi: Past and Present, East and West*. Oneworld. Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Sage.
- Moore, D. J. (2014). *The ecstatic poetic tradition: A critical study from the ancients through Rumi, Wordsworth, Whitman, Dickinson and Tagore*. McFarland & Company.
- Moseley, A. (2001). Philosophy of love. In J. Fieser & B. Dowden (Eds.), *Internet encyclopedia of philosophy*. <https://iep.utm.edu/love/>
- Nicholson, R. A. (Trans.). (1966). *The Mathnawi of Jalaluddin Rumi* (8 vols.). Luzac. Nussbaum, M. C. (2001). *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ozdemir, I. (2013). *Rumi and Confucius: Message for a New Country*. Tughra Books.
- Palmquist, S. R. (2008). Reunion and mystery of love. In *The tree of philosophy* (4th ed.). Philopsis. <http://www.hkbu.edu.hk/~ppp/top/top25>
- Proust, M. (2003). *In search of lost time: Vol. 1. Swann's way* (L. Davis, Trans.). Penguin. (Original work published 1913).
- Ricoeur, P. (1976). *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*. Texas Christian University Press.
- Safi, O. (2009). On the "path of love" towards the divine: A journey with Muslim mystics. *The Journal of Scriptural Reasoning*, 8(1), 22-38.
- Schimmel, A. (1978). *The Triumph of the Sun: A Study of the Works of Jalaloddin Rumi*. Fine Books.
- Schimmel, A. (1994). Mawlana Rumi: Yesterday, today, and tomorrow. In A. Banani, R. Hovannisian, & G. Sabagh (Eds.), *Poetry and mysticism in Islam: The heritage of Rumi* (pp. 12-29). Cambridge University Press.
- Shafak, E. (2010). *The Forty Rules of Love*. New York: Penguin.
- Singer, I. (2009). *The nature of love: Vol. 2. Courtly and romantic*. MIT Press.
- Stendhal. (1975). *Love* (G. Sale & S. Sale, Trans.). Penguin. (Original work published 1822).
- Sternberg, R. J. (1986). A triangular theory of love. *Psychological Review*, 93(2), 119-135.
- <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.93.2.119>
- Tolle, E. (2005). *A New Earth: Create a Better Life*. Penguin Books.
- Underhill, E. (1955). *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*. Meridian.