

An Approach to Hafez's Poems Based on the Theories of Human Attractions

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Abstract. Many notions have been developed concerning attraction in human communications such as proximity, acquaintance, selective attention, stereotypes, similarity, and balance. By comparing these notions, which are all based on the concept of attraction, with Hafez's ideas in his poems it can be said that he has expressed these modern ideas centuries ago in form of poetry. As to Hafez's hierarchical categorization of these notions and their qualities we could say that he has often centered his ideas on himself, God, as well as his beloved, and this implies a loving and mystical atmosphere in his poems. Based on case studies of Hafez's poems, a tree diagram will come at the end of the paper with six main branches and 10 subcategories.

Keywords: attraction, human communications, Hafez's poems, human attractions.

1. Introduction

Communication has been defined in many ways and from tremendously various perspectives. Classically the core characteristic of all these definitions has been the transfer of concepts, messages, and thoughts produced by an individual's mind to one or more individuals. The definitions all refer, in one way or another, to the process of communication which begins from the sender and ends on the receiver's side. In human communications, which is itself a subcategory of communication studies, there is a separate branch for interpersonal communication processes which emphasizes on attraction as being important for establishing a communication process and also equally considers avoidance as having a crucial role in interrupting a communication process. The more the channels of attraction between two individuals, the less the probability of the disruption of their communication. Of course, too much attraction can also act negatively and lead to degrees of avoidance even up to a point where the process breaks down. By way of analogy, we may illustrate the discussion using Hooke's law of elasticity in physics. When a compressed spring is released (Figure 1), it begins to oscillate. First it extends and the two heads distance from each other (point N), which can be compared with the notion of avoidance in communication, and then it is again compressed (point M), which is comparable to attraction in communication. As in a spring being compressed, there is an initial attraction in an interpersonal communication process which stems from a variety of factors discussed below. During the compression, however, repulsive forces are gradually being formed and, having observed instances of improper behaviour which lead to avoidance, the two individuals, like a spring in its most compressed state, try to decrease their communications and distance each other up to total avoidance. But a spring does not oscillate infinitely; rather, due to reasons such as friction, it finally stops in a balanced in-between state (point O), and this corresponds to the majority of our interpersonal communications—that is, an interactive behaviour full of ups and downs which gradually turns into a state gained by means of mutual understanding on the part of both participants. In fact, the process of attraction in society begins with two individuals, who do not know each other, becoming acquainted and getting to know each other through interaction. In the process of avoidance, which starts parallel to attraction, the individuals utilize their cognitive experience to modify and correct their behaviour, which may even culminate in total disruption of the communication process. There are many factors involved in attraction which will be discussed below

through a discussion on Hafez's poems .But before beginning with the main topic, let's take a brief look at Hafez and his poetry to become more familiar with this great Persian poet.



Fig.1: Oscillations of spring along the X axis

2. Hafez and His Poetry

Hafez, one of the greatest poets of the world, was born in the eighth century A.H. (14th century A.D.). Most of his poems are in the form of a ghazal (resembling the sonnet) and mostly dealing with love. His Divan or collected works - including nearly 500 ghazals, some qasidas, two masnavis, several qit'as, and a couple of rubaa'ys - has so far been printed in 400 different forms in Persian and other languages. His profound knowledge of Persian and Arabic language and literature as well as of Islam made him a real Sufi who was the enemy of false Sufis. Hafez went beyond prejudice and freed himself from every sort of restraint to struggle against those who harnessed religion and power to oppress people. This made him a liberating figure whose Divan was for the most part dedicated to fighting against hypocrisy. To show the universal aspect of Hafez's character, it will suffice to mention that Goethe composed his West-Östliches Divan under his influence and dedicated its second chapter, entitled "Book of Hafez," to poems in praise of Hafez. Nietzsche, the great German philosopher, also composed a poem entitled "To Hafez." Hafez differs from other Iranian poets in that he mostly speaks of divine and mystical love in his poems. In his mystical poems, unreal (i.e., physical) love appears as a curtain behind which divine love is concealed^[11]

3. Proximity and Attraction

Attraction requires proximity, since it takes place only when an opportunity of communication occurs and such opportunity is engendered only by proximity of two individuals. In the past, proximity was conceived of as being merely physical, but the advent of cyberspaces in modern times has changed our conception of proximity. In spite of this, the scholars of communication mostly refer to the spatial and geographical aspect of proximity.

Every human finds the highest degree of proximity with his own self and, therefore, communicates with himself prior to anybody else. After one's self, God is most likely to be taken as a communication partner by all human beings. Certainly there are moments in life when everybody talks to himself and addresses himself as a communication partner or talks and prays to God, especially in hard times, as a present individual; both cases are rooted in proximity for which we cannot suppose any limitation. Case studies on Hafez disclosed that he has mentioned both of these points in his poems^[12]:

Of the secret of my distraught heart, a friend ,
 Among high and low, none, I see. (Ghazal, 8)
 O Muslims (kind of heart)! Once a heart, mine-
 Whereto I used to utter (revelations) if a difficulty- (Ghazal, 217)

In the two ghazals above Hafez obviously refers to the communication processes with himself and God, respectively, and states that there is no other partner better than he and God:

To him that hath chosen solitude, of the spectacle is what need?
 When the street of the Beloved is, of the desert is what need? (Ghazal, 33)

In the fifth line of ghazal 182 Hafez asserts that proximity with notorious people may spoil one's personality.

O Zahed! Pass from the circle of profligates to safety :

Lest ruined make thee, the society of some ill of fame.

More interestingly, Hafez states that he is very intimate with two winds and, therefore, that he communicates only with these two winds. In a great number of poems, the North Wind, or specifically Saba Wind, acts as a messenger between Hafez and his beloved and reminds him of the beloved by bringing her sweet scent. In so doing, Hafez combines proximity and attraction with natural elements and shows that these two notions should not be confined to human beings.

My sole companion is the breeze & Northern Wind
Save the breeze, everyone, in befriending me shall fail. (Ghazal, 333)

4. Acquaintance and Attraction

The second important notion with regard to attraction is acquaintance. As mentioned earlier, attraction entails that two individuals first become acquainted through a communication process. In fact, after proximity the two individuals first of all try to gather information about and get to know each other, and if this acquaintance is considered acceptable by both sides they are highly likely to become attracted and establish a stable relationship. Hafez also points out to the necessity of being well acquainted with one's communication partner and mentions that discourses should be precisely understood, which necessitates that one knows the speaker and his background.

O Heart-ravisher! thou art not a speech-recognizer. Here, the fault is :

When thou hearest the speech of people of heart speak not saying: "A fault it is." (Ghazal, 22)

A key line in Hafez's poems declares that we should first become acquainted with God if we want to become attracted towards Him. It says that the words of God cannot be heard unless one becomes intimate with and confidant to God.

So long as, with this screen (of mystery), thou becomes not acquainted, a hint thou hearest not :

Not the place for Jibra'il's message, is the ear of the unprivileged (Ghazal, 286)

Another aspect of acquaintance implied by Hafez is acquaintance with the beloved. In the first line of ghazal 182 he searches for an intimate messenger to communicate with the beloved. In other words, Hafez views acquaintance as the prerequisite of any communication.

Thou wrotest not the account of thy state; and, passed some time :

Where a confidant so that to thee, I may send some message?

In another poem, Hafez states that love is the cause of acquaintance and intimacy with the beloved.

Whoever enters the realm of love understands it to a certain degree and becomes acquainted to the same degree which finally leads to proximity and attraction.

Heart-sitting became my speech since thou acceptedest it:

Yes, yes; an impression, love's speech hath.

With the tavern-haunters, boast not of generosity :

Every word, a time; every subtlety, a place hath. (Ghazal, 125)

5. Selective Attention and Attraction

In addition to having proximity and acquaintance, in a communication process we need to act selectively and receive the pleasant messages of the communication partner instead of the unpleasant ones. This is called "selective attention" in human communications. Selective attention is necessary for attraction and establishing a stable communication. If one pays attention to all messages, the results of the process are not likely to be positive because not all messages are useful for attraction and stability of the communication process. This fact is also mentioned by Hafez. He emphasizes that in order to make attraction possible and stabilize the communication process one should pay selective attention both in sending and receiving messages and this point is true especially when one's partner owns a prominent status.

In love's path, none with certainty became the confidant of the mystery :

According to his understanding, everyone an idea hath. (Ghazal, 125)

In the above line Hafez emphasizes that all words should be uttered according to when and where they are being spoken. This "when and where" is central to selective attention.

On the carpet (stage) of subtlety – knowers, is the condition, no self – selling (boasting):

O man of wisdom! either words known (understood and weighed) utter ; or silent be. (Ghazal, 286)

This line clearly suggests that we should be careful in speaking to sage and learned people; either we should speak wisely or we have to keep silent, because keeping silent can help us much more than uttering uncalculated words to continue the communication process.

In the 14th line of ghazal 489 Hafez says that we should not be upset by unkindness from a person whom we respect and esteem; rather, quite the opposite, we have to apologize him/her so that he/she does not take umbrage at our behaviour. In this line, majestic king refers to God Almighty and one can observe in it, to some extent, the difference between oriental and western mysticism. Oriental, and particularly Islamic, mysticism emphasizes absolute submission to God and is oriented more towards hereafter, whereas western mysticism stresses upon striving in this world to improve human life and is, therefore, inclined towards anthropocentrism.

Hafiz! Since, sometimes, thy name King taketh (mentioneth),

To him, grief on account of fortune display not; in pardon-seeking, come back

Another aspect of selective attention, according to Hafez, is revealed when one is communicating with his beloved. Ghazal 81 contains a dialogue between a nightingale and his beloved, which is a fresh flower. In order to moderate the coyness of his beloved, the nightingale says that there are plenty of flowers like her in the garden and that she should not be too proud and unresponsive; in the next line, however, the flower confirms what he says but adds that no true lover allows himself to break the heart of his beloved. This artistic and beautiful analogy can refer not only to loving and marital relationships but also to any relationship in which both sides respect each other. Of course Hafez again stresses upon being careful of the method of speaking as well as upon observing the principle of selective attention.

At dawn, the bird of the sword spake to the rose :

” Display less disdain; for, in this garden many a one like thee hath blossomed“.

The rose laughed saying: “We grieve not at the truth; but

“No lover spoke a harsh word to the beloved.”

6. Stereotypes and Attraction

Another influential aspect of attraction is stereotypes. In every cultural milieu people develop particular attitudes which, in turn, prepare the ground for the formation of mental structures. These mental structures evolve and accumulate to shape collective stereotypes. Stereotypes hinder proximity and attraction to take place between people from different cultural backgrounds. However, frequent intercultural contacts may, to some extent, moderate or modify the stereotypes and make them more plausible. Therefore, stereotypes and prejudices can initially impede intercultural communications. Similarly, within a single culture, those who are against the shared stereotypes are likely to become isolated. For instance, Hafez, who was already a Quranic scholar before he became a poet, was excommunicated, according to Edward Browne’s Literary History of Persia in the last years of his life and even his dead body was deprived of being buried in Muslims’ cemetery. Why his poems have always been interpreted with prejudice by many people is far beyond the scope of this paper, but the only point to mention here is that we should not view Hafez’s poems literally; rather we have to decipher their delicately ambiguous meanings. As he puts it:

Friends! Within the veil, we utter speech:

It will be uttered with tales -,

Not the judge, doth the lover fear, - wine, bring -

Not the punishment of the Sultan-,

Knoweth that Hafiz is a lover (of God), the Muhtasib ;

And the Asaf of Sulaiman’s court,- (Ghazal, 363)

But in his time, nobody could reach the true meaning of his poems. In fact, his literal treatment of wine, which is prohibited in Islam, made people think that he is opposed to stereotypes and Islamic principles; therefore, prejudices arose and Hafez became isolated as if he were an outsider in that cultural milieu. In the

sixth line of ghazal 182 Hafez points out to this very fact and criticizes those who avoid telling the truth due to common stereotypes and presuppositions.

The defect of wine, all thou toldest; its profit also tell :
Negation of skill, make not for the sake of the heart of some people.

7. Similarity and Attraction

As to similarity and its relation with attraction and communication, Rodgers and Shoemaker say that, to a certain degree, more similarity between both sides in a communication process means a more efficient communication (Rodgers and Shoemaker, 1971). In more detailed words^[3], we can assert that often similarities lead to proper communicative conditions and reduce the distance, and this, in turn, causes more attraction. In such situation, the two individuals try to find and strengthen their points of similarity so as to stabilize their communication. Of course, it should not be neglected that similarities and differences are partly subjective. Sometimes similarities are taken as differences by the two individuals involved in a communication process, and vice versa; so in these cases similarities may not lead to more attraction. This can be illustrated by the fifth line of ghazal 65 in which Hafez cannot differentiate between a pious ascetic and a drunkard, for they are both human beings, and is in doubt as to which one he should choose.

The austere one and the intoxicated one both are of one family:
To whose glance, shall we give our heart? choice is what?

Another point regarding similarities is that there should be a sufficient amount of similarities as well as remarkable differences in some attitudes between the individuals who are engaged in a potentially communicative process. Thus, they can discuss their differences and influence their attitudes. In so doing, they can increase the amount of attraction. In this regard, Hafez has many ghazals, but his only Masnawi illustrates our point very clearly. Here he addresses a wild gazelle with a profound and delicate simile:

Where are you O Wild Deer?
I have known you for a while, here.
Both loners, both lost, both forsaken
The wild beast, for ambush, have all waken
Let us inquire of each other's state
If we can, each other's wishes consummate (Mathnavi)

He compares himself with the wild gazelle in that they are lonely and homeless and that there are dangers and traps on their way. Then, after enumerating their points of similarity, Hafez invites the gazelle to intimacy and not to neglecting each other. In fact, these lines express the gist of the concept of similarity.

8. Balance and Attraction

Every human being possesses some beliefs and attitudes in life which may be similar to those of others, but no two individuals can be found who have totally resembling ideas. As Heider puts it, "Every human strongly needs a psychological balance; humans require that the others' beliefs, attitudes, and values conform to their own" (Heider, 1957: 196.)

That is why every individual expresses his thoughts and wishes that other people incline to his beliefs^[4]. For instance, as to the hardships and pleasures of life, Hafez believes to some extent in Divine providence and expresses this belief in the fourth line of ghazal 186:

Sage! If before thee come sorrow or ease ,
Ascribe not to other; for these, God maketh.

Given that all people wish to make others conform to their own attitudes and behaviours, they like to stand in a state of balance with other people, and when such balance does not exist they try to create it, since it is necessary for a successful social life and its disappearance will lead to disorder and chaos. Hafez, this teacher of humanity, has a poem which suggests a solution for reducing such disorder.

Plant the tree of friendship, that, to fruit, the heart's desire bringeth:
Up-pluck the bush of enmity, that countless troubles bringeth. (Ghazal, 115)

The delicate point behind this line is that a mature tree is used to refer to friendship but a small shrub is used for enmity which should be eradicated.

As Farhangi puts it^[51], “this wish of balance creates in us the expectation that the person we love should conform to our attitudes and beliefs but, conversely, the person we dislike should differ from us in terms of attitudes, beliefs, and values” (Farhangi, 2008: 246). This can be seen frequently in Hafez’s poems. In order to put his audience in a pleasant psychological state, he gives them a good message in the following line and says that one day the oppressors will be punished because the universe is based on justice.

The way of Universe is founded upon justice
 Make merry for the oppressor will not reach his destination (Ghazal, 304)

The final point about balance is that if an individual is in an undesired state of imbalance he tries to obtain a balanced state; and, according to Hafez, such change is certainly feasible since, in ghazal 186, he believes in God’s help in this change.

If lawful the need of profligates, the wine-seller maketh ,
 His sin, God forgiveth; and, repelling of calamity maketh

Hafez’s ideas on human attractions which were discussed above can be summarized in a tree diagram as following:

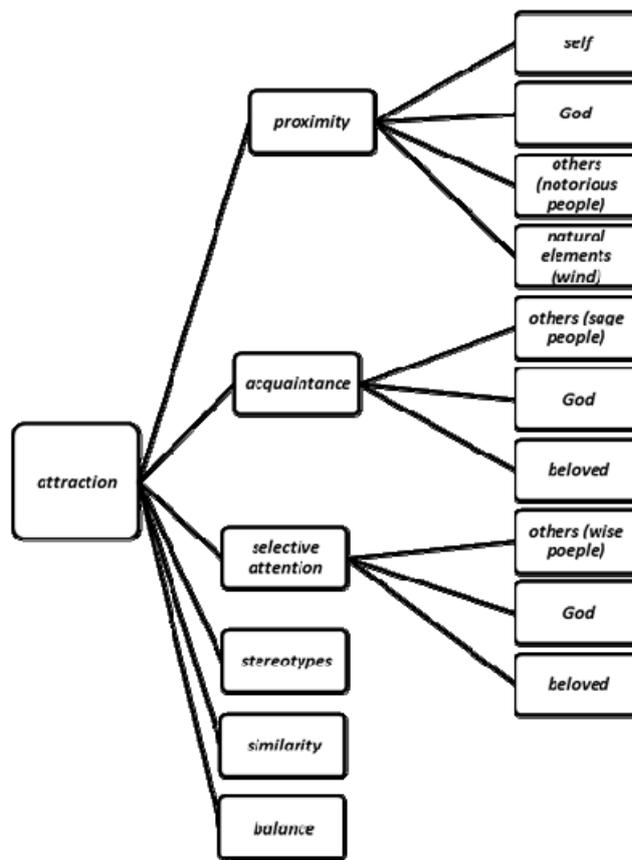


Fig.2: Different forms of human attraction from Hafez’s point of view

9. Conclusion

As discussed in the paper, in human communications, forces of attraction and avoidance are constantly fluctuating and changing the state of communication between individuals. Moreover, as attraction increases, the communication process is more likely to stabilize, and as avoidance increases, the disruption of communication process is more probable. It should be noted that attraction is related to many concepts including proximity, acquaintance, selective attention, stereotypes, similarity, and balance. The present paper attempted to discuss these notions and illustrate them through Hafez’s poems. In addition, it sought to

categorize Hafez's ideas in this regard. The results showed that, as to attraction in communications, Hafez deals, above all, with self, God, beloved, sage people, notorious people, and even natural elements and speaks about communicating with these entities. Especially the categories of self, God, and beloved are indicative of the loving and mystical atmosphere of his poems.

Finally it should be said that these were merely a hint at the profound aspects of Hafez's poems. There are many other points about social sciences and communications which can be discovered and revealed from his poems by means of more investigations on the part of interdisciplinary scholars.

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