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Love definition in the words of "the clod and the pebble", the romantic poem of William Blake

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ABSTRACT

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William Blake, a great poet, engraver, and artist, was born in November 28, of 1757 in London. From his childhood he enjoys artistic works and when their parents sent him to painting class, after passing five years, he became a perfect engraver and drawer. He used to compose poem and engraving together, that's why he earned money in this way. In the poem of "The Clod and the Pebble" he explains the meaning of love from two opposite viewpoints. The clod's view is a sound of innocent and purity, but the pebble's notion is the sound of experience. In this research, the author tried to survey the different definition of love in the words of great philosophers and critics.

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1. Introduction

1.1. William blake's biography

William Blake was born in 28th days of November of 1757 in London. He was a great poet, drawer and genius in making print, but unfortunately he never recognized during his life and now after passing three centuries, he is known as a firm figure of poetry and drawing in Romantic Era. Northrop Frye in his "Collected Works of Northrp Frye" (2006) states that Blake by his poetry builds "what is in proportion to its merits the least read body of poetry in the English language". From his childhood, he went to drawing

class and at his young age he became a perfect engraver, as Jonathan Jones in "Blake's Heaven" (2005) indicates that Blake was "far and away the greatest artist Britain has ever produced". Blake creates a lot of honor after his death, and in 2002 he placed 38 of 100 Greatest Britons in BBC's international vote. He never left London and he lived there all his lifelong, and he created numerous works of art and literature which all had its root in the God's body or human living.

However William Blake was regarded as a creative and argumentative critic, the philosophical and mystical category of his works are always expressed. Blake's poetry and engraving are considered as Romantic and Pre-Romantic actions, because they are influencing by eighteenth century. In his lifelong he never left London, but he was extremely influenced by American and French Revolution. Although after some years he refused some of these political strifes, he kept his friendship with influential politician Thomas Paine, who was inspired by some great thinkers as Emanuel Swedenborg. "The 19th-century scholar William Rossetti characterised him as a "glorious luminary", and "a man not forestalled by predecessors, nor to be classed with contemporaries, nor to be replaced by known or readily surmisable successors" (Wikipedia, 2014).

According to Sepideh Kamarzadeh in her essay, "Postcolonial Narration in the Greatest Romantic Work of William Blake's 'The Little Black Boy'" (2014) the Blake's "principal poetic works is: Poetical Sketches (1783); Tiriel (1789); Songs of Innocence (1789); The Book of Thel (1789- 1791); Visions of the Daughters of Albion (1793); Songs of Innocence and Experience (1794); Europe, A Prophecy (1794); America, A Prophecy (1794); The Book of Urizen (1794); The Book of Ahania (1795); The Songs of Los (1795); Vala or The Four Zoas (1796- 1807); Milton (1804- 1815); Jerusalem (1804- 1820)."

2. Discussion

2.1. Love definition from different philosopher's viewpoint

Oxford English Dictionary defines love as a "disposition or state of feeling with regard to a person which (arising from recognition of attractive qualities, from instincts of natural relationship, or from sympathy) manifests itself in solicitude for the welfare of the object, and usually also in delight in his or her presence and desire for his or her approval; warm affection, attachment."

"Ancient Greeks identified four forms of love: kinship or familiarity (in Greek, *storge*), friendship (*philia*), sexual and/or romantic desire (*eros*), and self-emptying or divine love (*agape*). Modern authors have distinguished further varieties of romantic love. Non-Western traditions have also distinguished variants or symbioses of these states. This diversity of uses and meanings combined with the complexity of the feelings involved makes love unusually difficult to consistently define, compared to other emotional states" (Wikipedia, 2014).

Plato defines love as a type of virginal, non-sexual, and pure expression. After the death of Plato, they called this philosophical nature and entity of love as Platonic love. Platonic love in this sense is derived from Plato's Symposium which is the main topic of Eros or love. It clarifies the situation of love which begins by a simple feeling and gradually developed both non-sexual and sexual nature of human being. In the dialect of Socrates, it is of a particular significance to relate the ideas of earthy love in order to reach the divine love. For Plato and Diotima, the real and perfect use of love and giving it to others directs human soul and mind to divine love. In other words, Platonic love arouses the love from the soul and mind to other person and directs this earthy love to spiritual and divine's one.

For Socrates, as in "Symposium" of Plato, there are two sorts of Eros or love, one of them is earthy love (vulgar Eros) and the other one is divine love (divine Eros). As he explains, Vulgar Eros is a materialistic attraction toward earthly pleasure and have affection to physical and facial delight. But Divine Eros is a journey begins from materialistic attraction, e.g. beautiful body or form, and gradually this love transcends human toward the center of Beauty, which is the Supreme God. The term of Divine Eros is after a while changed to Platonic love.

From Freud's viewpoint ambivalence is a key term for expressing love or hate toward an object at the same time. Julian Wolfreys et. all in "Key Concepts in Literary Theory" (2006), explain ambivalence as a "term signals powerful mutually contradictory feelings concerning a particular subject or the uncertainty arising from such an unresolved state. Employed in particular strands of postcolonial critical discourse and

developed specifically from the work of Homi Bhabha, ambivalence in this context signifies the condition produced through the discourse of mimicry, whereby in the process of imposing on the colonial subject the desire to render that subject the same as the colonizer, there is produced, say Bhabha, a difference, slippage one excess. Thus the colonial other is produced as almost, but not quite, the same, thereby producing disquiet in the colonialist, and thus a renewal of the fear of the other."

During the physical development, at oral stage, the first love of a child is the mother's breasts. Through the first sub-stage of oral stage, there is not any ambivalence toward mother's breast because child concerns himself and wants to satisfy his own need to food. In the second sub-stage of Oral stage, the child grows up a little and learns biting, that's the beginning of appearing ambivalence. Now the child is interested to "libidinal and aggressive gratifications", and at this time the mother's breast becomes the loved or hated object (Wikipedia, 2014). He loved it when it makes pleasure for him and removes his hunger, but at the other side it is the origin of frustration and being hated. At this age the infant fears from others, especially adults, and the beginning of biting is such a destructiveness experience. "Since the oral activity is still the main source of pleasure, and the mother's breast is genuinely loved, the addition of a sadistic component now turns in real ambivalence" (Wikipedia, 2014).

Lacan looks at this issue by using the same way which Freud uses in defining ego in psychology. As Freud mentions "when the I assumes the features of the object, it is forcing itself, so to speak, upon the it as a love-object and is trying to make good the it's loss by saying: Look, you can love me too-I am so like the object" (Freud 1961, 30).

Even Freud was in this view, Fairbrain (1986) extremely emphasizes and writes that "the gradual change which thus occurs in the nature of the object-relationship is accompanied by a gradual change in libidinal aim, whereby an original oral, sucking, incorporating and 'taking' aim comes to be replaced by a mature, nonincorporating, and 'giving' aim compatible with developed genital sexuality" (Fairbrain, 1986). So, it is obvious that the proper psychological situation of a child is a mirror which reflected his or her physical environment and situation, and the consequence of a healthy physical development makes person able to love others by open handedly, freely, and unselfishly.

Tillich defines love as a process of failure in success. He states that "fulfilled love is, at the same time, extreme happiness and the end of happiness. The separation is overcome" (Tillich, 1954).

It is vital to discern between different sorts of love expression, but according to Tillich (1954) it is at the same important to understand that "love is one" and all of them have the equal root. All of these expression from brotherly love and friendship (*philia*), to desire (*epithymia*), to love to God (*caritas*), to disinterestedness love (*agape*) are equally the same, and the fragments of a unity. While Nygrens (1957) has opposite view and declares that there is a fundamental distinctions between *eros* and *agape* and criticizes all of them whom break this rule, Tillich puts emphasis on his idea that all fragments and parts of love has the same aim and origin and seek the same unity.

This unity, for Tillich, contains both view; one of them is originary and the other is the separate fragments. For him "Love is the drive toward the unity of the separated. Reunion presupposes separation of that which belongs essentially together. . . . Therefore love cannot be described as the union of the strange but as the reunion of the estranged. Estrangement presupposes original oneness" (Tillich 1954).

And Lear also indicates that "because my love affair is with a distinctly existing world, I must be disappointed by it. A distinctly existing world cannot possibly satisfy all my wishes" (Lear, 1990).

2.2. Analysis of "the clod and the pebble"

In the poem, the clod and the pebble have different ideas about love. In clod's idea, in real life there isn't any thought for own self " but for another gives its ease", and a real lover should be humble and self-immolated. By contrast, in pebble's idea, a lover should only think of own self, give love to other just for receiving a better love and puts itself in the center. Maybe the clod's love is more valuable than the pebble's. Pebble is jealous, selfish, greedy and enjoys cruelty and power, by contrast, clod is unselfish, admiring, generous, and enjoys the delight of the other. But neither pebble, nor clod love is acceptable. Too much selfishness is not admirable, and too much patient is dangerous, too, because the former makes him to rebel against all the rules, and the latter is the reason of disservice of others.

In the poem the refrain of love is obvious and that explicits the two different views on the love and it's nature. The "Clod of Clay" expresses love as a selfless entity, which is constructing " a Heaven in Hells despair". But the "Pebble of the brook" represents love as a selfish entity and "only Self to please", in order to construct "a Hell in Heavens despite."

The love, a neutral nature, which has been bound by reason, gives men the notion of loving selfishly or selflessly. The difference between love notion is expressed by two speakers, which are inanimates and each of them is a symbol of animated entity. The clod is "Trodden with the cattle's feet", means it is flexible and easily shaped by the will and interest of the others. The pebble is a hard and though entity in the brook and suggests to be resistance to anyone who seeks benefit in other. In other analysis, pebble is stable and always stay at the bottom of the river, while the clod is moveable and mobile, sometimes at the bottom and sometimes at the surface. It is an ironic use of experience, Blake depicts the love which at one side is selfish and from reason and makes a Hell on earth, while the selfless love- love from depth of heart - can construct a Heaven in the Hell, which makes by human being. The poem never allow the reader to be at the side of Clod and its attitude toward love. Both of them, clod and pebble, are at the same harmony, pebble is be pleased of others' loss of and clod is be joyful of loss of its ease in order to make a Heaven on the Hell of despair which surrounded the mankind.

By looking at its structure, at first of the poem there is a fair and equitable points of view about love, while the word "but" in the 6th line, makes a turn from clod's point of view to pebble. The clod's idea about love is the result of its guiltlessness and purity and the pebble's idea has its root in experience. "And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair" (line 4) and "And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite" (line 12) are two opposite lines through them Blake expresses two points of view about love, but he ended the poem by a line from pebble. Pebble's notion is the sound of experience, maybe he chose this line as an ending in order to aware the reader from his own mind. He mentions two viewpoints about love from different speakers, but at the end, put his own idea about love for finalizing the poem by giving his favor in love.

William Blake's "The Clod and the Pebble" was written in 1794 and was in the second part of *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. The poem is a description of a selfish love, depicted by Pebble, and selfless love, depicted by clod. These two different attitudes represent itself in a book by name of *Innocence and Experience*, but the poet never give readers to judge about the poem and writes the end line as, poet's preferred, the experience one.

The poem of "The Clod and the Pebble" contains three stanzas, which here has been analyzed line by line.

Love seeketh not Itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care;
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a Heaven in Hells despair.

It is the first stanza of the poem which represents the clod's notion about love. Blake uses a clod to picture a sort of love which is soft, like clod because clod is made of soft clay and it shaped easily. In some analysis, clod is a symbol of women and its notion about love is somehow the viewpoint which is admirable by feminine. When clod states that "Love seeketh not Itself to please/ Nor for itself hath any care", it offers an selfless kind of love. Clod is a symbol of purity and innocence, as we have in Quran that the Holy God says, we creat human from a pure and genuine clay. In the third lines of the first stanza, "for another gives its ease", it represents the self-sacrificing nature of love in clod's idea. The forth line, "builds a Heaven in Hells despair" pictures another kind of self-immolation. Perhaps Blake interprets Hell as a state of individuality. Clod believes that the real love is occurred when an actual lover can make a heaven among all individuality of his/her beloved.

So sang a little Clod of Clay,
Trodden with the cattles feet;
But a Pebble of the brook,
Warbled out these metres meet:

It is the second stanza and a metaphorical connection between two opposed notion. This stanza depicts the state of clod and pebble. Clod "sang " and expressed his selfless attitude toward love while it was "trodden with cattles feet". At the end of second line of this stanza, poet uses semicolon, in order to aware reader from a shifting which is about to occur from innocent and pure notion to experienced one.

Furthermore, using the word "But" indicates a sudden change from the sweet and pleasant notion in first stanza to an opposite one. In third lines, the pebble came into being as a hard and immobile entity and it is the sound of experience. In this line water is used as a sound of environment, which is translated to matter. Water, symbol of matter, shows purity which reflects the real entity of both clod and pebble into the nature. In the last line, Blake use the word "warbled", in order to picture the the pebble's notion about reality and actuality.

Love seeketh only Self to please,
To bind another to its delight:
Joys in anothers loss of ease,
And builds a Hell in Heavens despite.

It is the last stanza, which is about pebble's notion about love. Although the clod depicts as a smooth entity, the pebble has a hard, immobile, and changeless structure which indicates the power it gets from love experience. The pebble's word is as a mocking state of clod and its innocence notion about ideal love. Pebble speech is opposite of clod and shows an ideal love as selfish. Blake uses the word "bind" as a strong and powerful word, offers a kind of violent, brutal, and rough notion which confirmed the masculine notion toward ideal love. It shows the selfishness of love and looks for actual joy in loss of other's ease. The last line of the poem is reverse of clod's view and suggesting that the pebble's life at the bottom of brook, looks for the ease in the Hell which it makes in others' Heaven.

3. Conclusion

As a result, William Blake depicts two different viewpoints about love, the clod and the pebble. The clod is the symbol of innocence and purity, which sees love as a selfless nature and tried to builds a heaven in the individual hell. But pebble's notion is exactly vice-versa. The pebble is the hard, immobile, and changeless structure which indicates the power it gets from love experience and it looks for the ease in the Hell which it makes in others' Heaven. According to Plato the real love is one which leads human to divine love, so selfish love isnot admirable. And as Freud states love is along with hate but this hatered must not let the human to be selfish. But as some great critics analyzed, Blake states the pebble's idea at last line, in order to put his positive notion about pebble and expresses his agreement to it.

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