

Bad Love and its three categories

Xingyu Zhu

Shanghai Yue Kong Pao Senior Secondary School, Shanghai, 200335, China

Abstract. Bad love, as its name suggests, refers to unusual relationships between two parties that either harms the interest of one end or generally opposes the society's objective morality defined by Nietzsche as a set of rigid standards that people are raised and taught to conform to, usually conservative and fixed. (Islam, 2020) A typical instance of bad love is the erotic relationship between parents and their own children. Though only an allusion, the story of Oedipus Tyrannus illustrates how twisted love may bring about destruction and social disapproval, ultimately leading to detrimental consequences. Ancient people describe the demerits of bad love with the media of literature, oral storytelling, etc. Today, bad love appears to be an unusual term since the developed knowledge of biology reveals to the general public about the genetic defects resulted from incest behavior. But if we are to define bad love in a broader sense that takes into account the various forms of negative emotional attachments to certain figures or obsession with problematic social norms, it may be concluded that bad love has never ceased to exist; instead, it changes its form in accordance with the diversifying culture and society. This essay will focus primarily on three types of bad love, namely, love generated by excessive reliance on parents out of sexual desire, love built on gender inequality, and the radical loving relationship between children and parents which sits on the extreme ends of the love spectrum.

Keywords: love, Oedipus Complex, bad love, eros, romance, relationship, superego, inequality, Electra complex.

1. Introduction

We tend to assume that love is a term without negative connotations. When we think of the concept, we relate it to the image of marriage, family reunion, intimate conversations, etc. But is it true that all sorts of love ought to be treasured and encouraged? Let's think about love in the simplest form. An intuitive definition of it is an emotional obsession. When you fall in love, you connect with another subject emotionally, growing feelings of affection, protectiveness, warmth, and respect. That is, at least, what modern people tend to think of love as. Love, however, has gone through a chronic history and was developed before humans' systematic recognition of romance. Its meaning had also been revolutionized, rendering it an utterly different implication if viewed from hindsight. The point I am trying to make here is that modern people define love with a romanticized lens. To love is now defined as the act of liking another adult very much and being romantically and sexually attracted to them, or to have strong feelings of liking a friend or person in your family. Indeed, love is an intimate relationship; yet the degree of intimacy varies. Love that is either too strong and evolves into indulgence or too faint and regresses into a mere sense of obligation and even less than that is not healthy love. Also, love is sometimes confused with eros, the Greek etymological term for the modern English word erotic. Eros is a dull concept: While love may hardly be generalized through its dictionary meaning due to its all-encompassing nature and wide implications, Eros simply means sensual or passionate love. The major distinction between it and the modern word love is that eros abandons the non-physical elements. It is entirely consisted of sexual relationships. While it is still a form of love, it cannot be used to generalize the whole concept. It translates more apropos into desire. Our love is a refined version of Eros. The love that is built on the pure sexual and phallic foundation is not advocated by contemporary civilizations. (Sprecher, 1988) The age of Eros has come to an end. Nevertheless, many negative loving relationships still prevail, though not promoted nor approved. Humanity scholars now invent a term to categorize the various forms of inappropriate love: bad love. As the opposite of love, bad love includes all loving relationships that are unethical. It may similarly mean the absence of love in a relationship where it is meant to present an intense love that is

appropriate. It is necessary to clarify here that not all “love” being referred to in this essay can be directly equated with emotional attachment. (Green, 1995) That will be considered as “sentimental love”, which presents in the case of the Oedipus complex and is likely absent in unequal relationships. The love mentioned in this case is an official title for certain relationships. We would assume the presence of love between husbands and wives, but what if the relationship is built upon stereotypes that women are obliged to take care of their husbands? Is this caring behavior a demonstration of love? The answer no appears instinctive, and love here is probably not the fittest term for the context. However, it may still be situated under the bad love category, since it serves as a violation of healthy, ideal loving relationships. This essay seeks to analyze three forms of bad love and discuss about the social implications of the prevalence of each respective category.

2. Oedipus Complex

Sigmund Freud developed two psychoanalytic theories of love (Bergmann, 1988). In the first theory, he suggested that love and sexuality are initially combined when the “child is sucking at his mother’s breast. The finding of the love object is in fact a refinding.” (Freud, 1905: 222) Love in this case can be interpreted as a vague nostalgic sensation, intertwining with a desire for sexual pleasure. The need for care from the motherly figure is the prototype of love, and as Freud suggested, to seek love in later phases of life is a human’s active attempt to look for a complement, more precisely a parody, of parental love. (McLeod, 2018) Freud’s first theory puts an emphasis on the inherent nature of love, as well as the long-lasting impact of parental care on the psychosexual development of children. He claimed that between approximately age seven and adolescence, children go through a “latency period” during which one may observe a halt and retrogression in the children’s sexual development, thus mitigating their sexual desires toward the parents. (Freud, 1905) By adolescence, the sexual impulse re-emerges, but the children should be able to redirect their love onto people else than their parents, to eventually engage in a healthy relationship, which I refer to as ‘good love’. (Bjorklund, 2010) The antithesis of it is bad love. To achieve the state of good love requires the individuals to be fully separated from their parents. If by this time the subject maintains a twisted affection for their parents, they tend to consider loving relationships as an alternate version of parental love. This misconception of love, expressed in the form of over-reliance and inability to stay independent emotionally from the parents, is a form of bad love.

Freud devised the Oedipus complex theory inspired by the folk tale of the same name to reveal that it comes almost with instinct that a boy will become “unconsciously sexually attached to his mother, and hostile towards his father.” (Freud, 1909) Oedipus in the story is abandoned by his parents because of the prophecy that he will “unwittingly kill his father and marry his mother.” His father ties his hands and feet and leaves him on a mountainside to die, but he is lucky enough to be rescued by a shepherd. He is raised by the king of Corinth, and therefore never knows about his biological parents. Oedipus sets out on a journey after reaching manhood. The story matches the prophecy—Oedipus manages to kill the old man arguing with him at a crossroads, who later turns out to be Oedipus’s biological father; Being honored as a hero, Oedipus is rewarded with marrying Jocasta the Queen, Oedipus’ birth mother. Freud invented the concept of the Oedipus complex to suggest that the story is not simply a myth, nor a coincidence. It is psychologically common for people will look for a love partner of similar attributes to their parents. Oedipus unfortunately, inevitably connects with his mother in the story, ending up falling into a relationship with her. With this allusion, Freud indicated that instinctive love is likely to develop in a distorted direction. In this case, the child will become dependent emotionally upon the family members, unwilling and unable to face their own future life. In Freud’s Oedipus complex, father and son may fight over the possession of women in the family. (Freud, 1909) This includes the mother, who is also the partner of the father. The son is jealous of the relationship between the father and mother, so he sees the father as the love enemy. As for the role of the mother, the sexual value of the female stimulates the male’s desire for protection, either from the father or the son. (Davis, 1973) The female sexuality gives rise to the conflict among male family

members. (Green, 1995) Whereas the struggle is often entitled to the competition for love, its essence is purely sexual, making the father-son relationship unhealthy and unethical. There are many recorded cases of incest in Greco-Roman times, especially in the royal families, providing vivid examples of the Oedipal bad love.

At around the same time, the Electra complex, a female version of bad love expressed in the form of affection for the father and hatred towards the mother, was developed by Carl Jung. What is common between the two theories is that they both emphasize the different attitudes a child holds while dealing with parents of the same gender and the opposite. (Jung, 1949) The general pattern is that the same sex is often resented, and the opposite sex is adored. The nature of hostility aimed at the father, according to Freud, is jealousy. (Freud, 1905) A similar phenomenon can be observed in its counterpart theory. In the Electra complex, there is an element of "penis envy", whereby the daughter blames the mother for depriving her of a penis. (Thompson, 1943) The implication of the hostile feelings is that it will bring about castration anxiety, the irrational fear of both literal and figurative emasculation as punishment for desiring his mother. (Horney, 1924) The anxiety needs to be resolved by the child's spontaneous attempt to identify with a parent of the same sex and begins to approve of his or her personality and value. For Freud, when a boy treats his father as a role model as opposed to a rival, he obtains what is known as the "superego". The boy will substitute his desire for his mother with that for the other women. (Freud, 1905) This process is mandatory for the foundation of good love among teenagers. Though appears common and taken by society as default, the children's adaptation to the correct sense of love does require the proper guidance from the parent as a prerequisite, or else it would inevitably fall under the category of bad love.

3. Unequal Love

The disempowerment of females and the patriarchal nature of ancient and medieval society gave rise to the social reality whereby males were treated as superior and females often inferior. A radicalized example of this was during the time of Ancient Greece. Back then, democratic Greek city-states allowed their citizens to speak up for major political decisions. Greeks defined citizens as fully-grown male adults; females, slaves, and foreigners were effectively excluded from the citizen category. (National Geographic)

Throughout history, women have predominantly been treated as subordinates to their male counterparts. They were only worshipped highly in the old nomadic style of life when humans value highly the conception of fertility. This phenomenon is known as the Great Goddess hypothesis, the belief that ancient women had a high social status due to their reproduction functionality and direct contribution to the quantity of available manpower. (Eller, 2000) When the tribes settled and adopted a sedentary style of life, the priority of agriculture surged. Productivity and the masculinity of males became more vital to the continuation of tribal communities than fertility. The stereotype that only men were capable of performing labor-intensive tasks prevailed and made women the vulnerable group in society. This prejudice brought about a wide-ranging male dominance, which consequently led to men's occupation of important positions in the workplace and political occasions in contemporary society. It is also because of men's physical strength that working outside became a privilege entrusted to man which allowed them to be kept away from heavy home duties. (Hansen, 2015) The aforementioned causations resulted in the uneven distribution of power in families: husbands who were responsible for incomes earned more discourse power, making them the alleged householders. Women were known by their identities as the power owner's appendages. Unlike the ideal equal relationship pledged by men in the wedding vow, this form of relationship resembles more the master-slave relationship. (Hoffman, 1975)

In rural areas in China, many women were taught to obey men as children. They are expected to be the idealized, obedient mates for men, leaving them banned from legitimate manual work. To limit their mobility, a strange custom called "bound feet" was invented. This practice was more common in Qing and other feudal dynasties. (Greenhalgh, 1977) Women's ability to do physical labor was

utterly deprived in subjugating themselves to such practice. The deformity and distortion of their bodies fulfilled an ill standard of beauty that was popular among ancient Chinese. Women's weakness reinforces male control. Couples were unequal, even though the marriage relationship was meant to be out of mutual love. Men gained the right to demand women to flatter in order to please them through objective morality which puts women in an inferior position. In modern days, the written rules of the Greek times which publicly display discrimination against females have been, through official documentation, abandoned. Yet, it begins to influence women, especially those who live in the countryside, in more subtle and hidden manners, making gender inequality and male supremacy the unspoken rule. The female's social duty could be considered fallacious to a large extent since they were forced to contribute to family lives by giving birth to the next generation, a process which involves suffering and a prolonged period of pregnancy immobility, while at the same time expected to handle a multitude of housework. Though these burdens also require physical dedication, the females' efforts in maintaining the operation of families went unrealized, unrecognized by their husbands and society. Females had to deal with various male gaze without stepping out of the ethical line. (Vargün, 2006) In ancient times, the lack of faith in his wife was sometimes considered tolerable for man. An example of this can be seen in *The Odyssey* by Homer, where Odysseus is involved in sexual relationships with goddesses, and his partner Penelope is expected to remain chaste in twenty years' time. The example serves as a reflection of the Ancient Greek's take on man and female relationships. It may be inferred that a rigid moral expectation was set for ancient Greek women, taken as default.

In many social ideologies, polygamy was considered reasonable; but if women stood on the unfaithful side, they were to be condemned and reviled by their neighbors. There are far more abusive words for women in modern English than that for men. Swear words like "Bitch," "whore," and "harlot" are used to show extreme malice. (Gauthier, 2017) Consider words that criticize frivolous men: "playboy," "dandy, or at worst," "bastard." These words, in comparison to the derogatory insults to women, display an ironic sense of ridicule instead. Most egregiously, all that being mentioned are the society's connivance. Nearly everybody in ancient times would agree that females were obliged to take care of the children and perform housework, while males ought to work outside the home and provide financial and food support for the family. With such convention, men are naturally given more freedom and the right to stay away from home, and women are trapped at home to work on static tasks. This in itself involves bias and inequality. Love built upon the unequal status of men and women is the second type of bad love.

4. Indifference and indulgence

Love is a spectrum: there are two extreme ends to it, and people are always looking for the equilibrium point to find a state of balance. Love that is either too intense or too faint may not be considered "good love". The case of indifference in love appeared more common before the moral code of filial respect and child love became widely held, making it a more primitive form of bad love. In times of war, especially in Rome, the fathers trained their children physically, teaching them to hunt and kill through coercion. The fathers did not take care of the children mentally and might often scold them when they were not performing well. (Johnson, 1980) Such an indifferent attitude embeds in the children's minds a sense of hatred. It is ironic how the father's indifference in this case was out of a virtuous intention. In tribal lives, it is always mandatory for the younger generation to stay independent so that they may cope with natural disasters and take over the role of the householder's role when necessary if the men in charge pass away in wars or accidents. From this, it may be concluded that the training offered to the son which intends to pass down useful skills reflects the particular form of caring behavior of males. To establish a masculine figure, the fathers did not appear as intimate with their sons as the mother yet hidden under the indifferent mask is the fathers' kind will to cultivate their successors. But Malinowski's study of the Trobriand Islanders showed that where the father is the son's disciplinarian (i.e. an avuncular society), the father-son relationship

would inevitably be bad. (Malinowski, 1929) In childhood times, sons, and this is gender specific, got into conflicts with their fathers due to the harsh training. The impacts of this tend to be often long-lasting. As a result of childhood trauma, grown-up sons are more likely to abandon their duty of taking care of their parents when they grow older and become physically incapable. The daughters are involved less in these scenarios as ancient clans occur on massive scales with an abundance of both sons and daughters. The treatment of the elderly is often assigned by the sons, the direct successors of power and territory. The sons who grew up under his father's aegis often left their parents alone. (Stuifbergen, 2011) When his personal interest is at stake during a conflict, the son is also apt to prioritize his own benefits over those of his parents. Eventually, when the father-son relationship which was meant to involve love evolves into a form of utilization, out of neither respect, nor sincerity, but out of utilization, it deteriorates and becomes an example of the third category of bad love.

On the other side of the love spectrum is indulgence. Being the antithesis of nonchalance, indulgence refers to the excessive care one dedicates to another person. Since the third category of bad love is set to be between parents and children, the indulgence here specifically refers to the parents' spoil over the kids. (Erikson, 1964) Indulgence typically grows the waywardness of children so that when they reach the biological age of maturity, they still possess a childish mindset. Biological maturity and mental maturity are two concepts that need to be distinguished. A mentally mature person maybe defined as one who, confronted with a particular situation and knowing ' what is what ', can carry out the wisest rather than the smartest action. (Alexander, 1948) However, a physiological standard of maturity, also known as biological maturation, stipulates that one is fully mature as long as "a natural lifelong process that promotes morphophysiological changes in individuals" is observable. (de Almeida, 2020) The difference renders the two concepts parallel. One may be mentally mature as a child. This is often an indication of an outstanding educational background. On the other hand, many may have seen examples of adults who behave like children in documentaries. This trend, though intricately associated with inappropriate education and bad love, is sometimes the direct result of genetic defects. The intersectionality between mental and biological maturation is brain development. Thoughts and ideas are processed by the brain mechanisms and having certain defects which hinder the secretion of certain hormones would inevitably bother a person mentally. This is said to correct the misconception that childishly behaving adults are all products of twisted love and education. However, having no causation effect doesn't point to the absence of correlation. In China, a special term is even invented to refer to the group of people whose behavior doesn't match with their age, note that this has to be a result of non-biological reasons. It should also be clarified that being immature is not the equivalent of being unsmart. Genius minds may as well be immature. These people are generally known as "giant infants". (Gao, 2017) Giant is used to describe their large body size of them comparing with actual infants, and infant depicts their fragile, inconsiderate mentality. Westerners tend to refuse to these people as spoiled. Their existence impacts society negatively since as adults they would occupy certain work spots or start their own businesses. In many episodes of Kitchen Nightmares, an American reality TV show in which Chief Gordon Ramsey took part, the audience could see cooks and bosses who may be categorized as "moody", "irrational" and "imprudent". For the bosses, particularly, they rely on their parents' savings to run their restaurant which suffered from deficits. The financial support provided by the parents, initially with good intentions, facilitates the child's growth of economic dependency upon others. This will inevitably create a vicious cycle whereby the parents invest, the child wastes, the parents invest again, and the child wastes more. Gordon Ramsey's solution to this is to suggest the parents who provided material support to the incapable restaurant owners cut down the money supply. Indeed, the best way to cultivate the spirit of independence in the child is to force them to stay independent. The method of constant money provision only solves problems in the short term. It may be deemed as a version of indulgence, thus a form of bad love.

Another social implication of indulgence is bullying. The spoiled kids often assume their superiority over the others as parents at home imparted them such mindset. Korea is a country where

intense school-bullying takes place. In *The Nature of Bullying in South Korean Schools* by Hyojin Koo, it was indicated that “5.80% of Korean pupils suffered by being bullied whereas 10.2%) pupils reported that they bully other peers.” (Koo). To reveal the social problem, Ahn Gil-ho directed a streaming television series *The Glory* which aims to reveal the damage done by bullies on the victims and how their life takes a “pause” when severe bullying behavior occurs. In the show, Park Yeon-Jin bullied several of her peers and even murdered one of them. Nevertheless, the wealthy and influential family backgrounds prevented her from being subjected to interrogations. Even when Dong-Eun, a victim of extreme school bullying reported the instance to the police, nothing really happened. Park Yeon-Jin’s mother colluded with the police officer and coerced Dong-Eun to withdraw her charge. Knowing that her mother would protect her with power influence, Park Yeon-Jin continued her bully in the campus even after the former victims dropped out. The TV show established the figure of someone who maliciously utilizes the “love” of her parents to fulfill unethical purposes. Indulgence in this case is shown via the illegal protection offered to the performer of school bullying and it exacerbated the sadistic propensity of the child, leading to the birth of a villain. From this, we may see evidently about the negative implications of indulgence as a form of bad love on society, particularly in countries where certain family background could provide strong judicial influence.

5. Conclusion

In a nutshell, the multifaceted nature of love, while often seen as a universally positive force, reveals itself to be a complex interplay of emotions, motivations, and societal influences. As we delve into the various dimensions of love, it becomes evident that not all expressions of affection are inherently beneficial or conducive to healthy relationships. The modern conceptualization of love, rooted in emotional connections and mutual respect, has evolved from historical interpretations and cultural contexts. Yet, within this evolution, we encounter forms of bad love that challenge the idealized notions we hold. From Freud's Oedipus complex, which exposes the potential distortion of instinctual desires, to the unequal power dynamics perpetuated by historical gender norms, and the extremes of indifference and indulgence that lead to emotional stunting and even malicious behavior, the spectrum of bad love demonstrates the intricate ways in which our emotional bonds can become tainted or dysfunctional. Recognizing these nuanced shades of love is essential in our quest for genuine and wholesome connections. While the journey towards understanding and fostering healthy relationships may be fraught with complexities, it is through acknowledging and addressing the darker aspects of love that we can aspire to create a more enlightened and compassionate approach to this fundamental human experience. Ultimately, by critically examining the various forms of love and their implications, we learn that certain loving relationships in life are to be rejected, though most of them should be promoted. This essay’s aim is to illustrate the bad loves that people encounter in life, while at the same time listing some potential causes and consequences of them. The concluding word is that bad love should not be endorsed. Love correctly, as opposed to blindfolded think of love as an all-virtuous concept.

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