

3.2.2.3.5.1.5 Love as neuromolecular constellation

The essence of knowledge is engineering. If we can make it, we know it.

Love, being in love (which is not the same), longing, jealousy, desire, bliss, satisfaction and all the other emotions associated with love are really just expressions of specific neurochemical processes or neuromolecular constellations.

Materialistic philosophers have preached this for hundreds of years. But whether one would subscribe to their explanations was largely a matter of believe-it-or-not.

It used to be like listening to a physicist's explanation of why the transmission of sound through cable should theoretically be possible. How much more convincing is it to pick up the telephone and do a long-distance call.

Once it will be possible to engineer emotions with precision, esoteric explanations about them will be regarded as poetry or as nonsense, but definitely no longer as science or philosophy.

Wait a moment. We are already there. Though the techniques still lack calibration, we already can reliably engineer specific emotions. Fear, for example, with anxiogenic drugs. Or relaxation and calmness with sedatives. We can, with the application of specific pharmaceuticals, gain a person's trust far easier than with sweet promises and good deeds. It can be achieved with many a barbiturate, though the effect may not last.

Actually, whether through the application of specific barbiturates or through the combination of sweet promises and good deeds... if we want to gain the trust of a particular person, we will have to provoke specific neurochemical processes in that person's brain. Yes, even a simple sentence such as "I love you" has to be encoded chemically process to exert its effect on the person who gets to hear it.

Much of the control mechanism for our emotions rests with

neurotransmitters. Neurotransmitters are chemicals that act at the points where nerve cells connect with each other. The prevalence, or the presence or absence of specific amounts of neurotransmitters, as well as the density of receptor sites for specific neurotransmitters at nerve endings, will control to a wide extent the emotions to which we are subject.

Of special importance are the neurotransmitters dopamine and serotonin, a pair of neuroactive agents that somehow keep each other in check (just like testosterone and estrogen of the hormonal system, or the sympathetic and parasympathetic autonomous nervous systems).

Roughly, dopamine is associated with agitation, and serotonin with relaxation. (This is a very rough characterization indeed; but the aim of this article is just to generate some awareness for the rather prosaic basis of esoteric sentiments.)

The level at which we feel emotionally united with the rest of mankind depends on the dopamine / serotonin balance of our brains much more than it does on philosophical insight. People with a sufficiently high level of serotonin usually tend to emphasize common ground and altruistic motives, while characters primarily driven by dopamine tend to be more egoistic in nature (they probably are also more sexualized).

Thomas Hobbes and philosophers such as the German Max Stirner who established selfishness as the philosophy of egoism practically analyzed their own low serotonin levels as the essence of mankind.

Future generations will have a free choice among philosophies and value systems, not so much based on intellectual considerations but by mixing their own cocktails of serotonin and dopamine enhancers.

Actually, raising levels of serotonin can treat many states of psychological complications, not just depression. Schizophrenia as well as obsessive-compulsive disorders respond favorably to raising serotonin levels, primarily through SSRIs (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors).

On the other hand, the strength at which we feel our desires depends to a good extent on sufficiently high levels of dopamine.

I have much more experience with dopaminergic agents than I do with serotonin agonists. The reason is the specific reward system that I have installed in my life. I am very much centered on experiencing ever better sex. It's really the only thing that counts for me, and my interest in love primarily results from my experience that sex in a love relationship is so much more gratifying than casual sex, provided the love relationship doesn't drag along for too long a time.

While I have devoted a lot of time studying purely psychological techniques of engineering love, I am a firm believer in the pharmacological route. I apply psychological methods primarily because pharmacological methods on hand today are still so crude (apart from possibly being illegal).

Using dopaminergic agents on myself, I basically heighten desire, because satisfaction is all the deeper the higher desire has first been.

One dopaminergic agent I have applied a number of times is bromocriptine (marketed by Sandoz as Parlodel). I have had truly memorable orgasms on bromocriptine. I have, on bromocriptine, experienced pre-orgasmic states of desire that were high enough for climaxes to happen almost by themselves. Unfortunately, that extraordinarily positive effect of bromocriptine has been wearing off the more often I used it, so after some 30 applications, I decided to interrupt bromocriptine usage.

For the longest, I have used yohimbe and yohimbine (yohimbine being the active ingredient in yohimbe). Though an old medication, used for centuries, yohimbe is not fully researched. The medical literature emphasizes that yohimbine blocks presynaptic alpha-2-adrenergic receptors which results in increased blood flow to the sex organs, and reduced outflow.

But only now, journal articles are appearing, which attribute specific dopaminergic effects to yohimbine. Based on animal model experiments, it has been concluded that yohimbine application not only effects erections but also the duration of satiation periods

between events of copulation. The reoccurring of sexual desire of course is largely effected by dopamine activity in the brain.

While research into the dopaminergic aspects of yohimbine is still sketchy, it has long been known that yohimbine is an anxiogenic agent, meaning to say that it can be pharmacologically used to induce fear. Whether this works on the dopamine / serotonin axis or through other pathways that currently haven't be.