Articles

A Comparative Analysis of the Concept of Normality in the Work of Rumi and in Empirical Psychology

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Abstract

Today, the study of psychology in Iran is strongly influenced by the transmission of concepts from western psychology. These concepts, however, are sometimes at odds with Iranian culture, particularly with respect to ontology and anthropology. In light of this, a study of relevant Iranian cultural and religious principles could allow for a more nuanced application of western psychological concepts. This article focuses on the concept of the normal (and abnormal) subject; the aim is to compare western psychology with the work of Rumi (one of pioneers of Iran's rich culture). For this purpose, this article focuses on Rumi's book *Masnavi*, in which the author lists the characteristics of the perfect person, and compares this description with psychological definitions of the normal subject.

Keywords: Normality, Rumi, empirical psychology, Galton, Darwin, Freud, social approach, functional approach, statistical approach

Introduction

Pathology is a field that focuses on distinguishing normal and abnormal behavior through the application of concepts from

psychology and psychiatry. Abnormal psychology attempts to treat abnormal behavior, and specifically people who suffer from conduct disorders (Lotfi Kashani, 2004). One of the main questions addressed in this branch of psychology is, which criteria are the most valid for separating normality from abnormality?

In addition to its significance in the clinical domain, this question also has wide-ranging implications in terms of evaluating social behavior. While a study of the concepts of normality and abnormality in Iranian culture could focus on a variety of social customs, texts, or practices, this investigation focuses on the work of Rumi. This is for several reasons; first, he is one of the most influential writers in terms of his impact on Islamic thought, and on Persian language and culture. Secondly, today his work continues to be highly influential; however, it has been little studied. Thus, the present study seems likely to offer a useful contribution through a comparison of western psychology and Rumi's work (which itself reflects a Islamic rich culture).

The most difficult challenges for psychopathology include the definitions of normality and abnormality. To define means to determine the essential criteria that allow for discrete, mutually exclusive categories. Pathologists ask, what is abnormality? What are the limits of abnormal and normal behavior?

The concept of abnormality depends on a behavioral model that describes various degrees of conformity with acceptable behaviors. The use of the words "natural" and "acceptable" has been criticized, because these words are ambiguous and culturally specific. In responding to such critiques, and in attempting to account for behaviors that may be acceptable in one context but unacceptable in another, psychiatrist and historian Jorje Mora has designed a system based on social attitudes towards an individual(Kapalan and Sadok ,1933).

It seems that the definition of normality and abnormality overlaps with definitions of health and disease. Nowadays, scholars believe

that health and disease are not absolute states of being; rather, health should be understood as a continuum. Mental health is defined as "having successful mental functions in cognition and creation, and engaging in behavior that leads to profitable activities, and satisfactory relationships with others, and having the ability to adapt to changes, and tolerate difficulties" (Shahidi, 2002).

Historically, a range of definitions has been developed for "abnormality" and "normality." Each definition proposes criteria for distinguishing between the two.

Bagheri (2006) has listed the three most significant attempts to provide such definitions, each of which continues to influence the analysis of normality and abnormality:

- The statistical approach (Galton)
- The functional approach (Darwin)
- The social approach (Freud)

Galton and the Statistical Approach

- Focuses on the rarity of statistical occurrences
- Not to be expected

This approach is common in the study of normative behaviors, and depends upon the use of urceolate-shape cycloid mathematic analyses. In this approach, the middle of the cycloid represents the "normal" whereas the poles represent the "deviational." This approach reflects Galton's method of measuring human behavior. He used the term "middle human" to refer to the fact that, on this model, the majority of people tend to be appear at the center of the cycloid. The further from the center, the lower the numbers become (Javid, 2007).

Darwin and the Functional Approach

According to this approach, the relevant factors are disability or dysfunction. Darwin focused on natural selection and organism eternity, which refers to those organisms that demonstrate the highest level of adaptation to their environment. Darwin influenced psychology through his work on individual differences. Structural accounts tended to ignore individual differences, which led a group of psychologists, including Jams Ronal Angle, insisting upon their importance.

Angle worked in the field of constitution psychology, using a functional approach (at the University of Chicago). He stated that the main actions are awareness, correction, and the regulation of adaptive activities. He also held the position that psychologists should aim to help subjects conform to the requirements of their environment.

Freud and the Social Approach

In this approach, abnormality refers to behavior that departs from the norms of a particular social situation, and/or endangers the self or others.
This approach focuses on the ideal combination of the various components of an individual's psychology that lead to desirable social function. This approach is influenced by Freud's suggestion that norms function as ideals. When this definition offers that a psychologist or psychoanalyst talks about ideal individual, scrimmage with and complicated problem, or criteria of succeed treatment. In addition to the criteria for normalcy drawn from other theoretical frameworks, other criteria also apply. The most important of them, which today appear in the DSM, are as follows:

1. The individual's level of perturbation
2. The individual's age

The definition of acceptable behavior differs greatly depending on an individual's age. In other words, abnormality occurs "whenever in the light of plenty, stringency, continuation differs with other uniform behaviors; this behavior will be known as unusual and abnormal behaviors" (Kashani 2004).

This approach suggests that an individual who exhibits normal behavior has integrated. According to this definition, normal behavior is achieved over time. In other words, normality should be understood as a process.

These are the main western approaches to questions of normality and abnormality. Of course, the concept of normality is culturally specific: what is normal in one culture may be abnormal in another. It is important, then, to understand how these approaches may be inapplicable to Iranian culture. Iran has long been the source of theosophical and scriptural interpretation. Rumi was the most famous of the Gnostics; his poems are a key to understanding Iranian culture and history.

Although Rumi's viewpoint was theosophical, and thus very different from contemporary western science, this study focuses on Rumi's definition of the perfect person, in order to compare it with the psychological criteria for normalcy. The purposes of this investigation are as follows:

1. To explore the definition of the perfect person in the *Masnavi*
2. To explore the definitions of normalcy and abnormality in western psychology
3. To compare these two approaches.
4. To consider abnormality in Rumi's work
5. To modernize discussions in theosophy, and in practical and psychological theosophy.

Method

This study is qualitative; data are analyzed through the application of concepts, using a system of classification. This analysis is performed by two assessors who are familiar with the relevant literature.

Alfa Kronbakh is used to analyze categories; for coefficient Contingz analyzing, (CCkorr) will be used. That formula is as follows:

$$\sqrt{\chi^2 / n + \chi^2} = CC \text{ (Contingenz coeffizient)}$$
$$CC_{korr} = CC / CC_{max},$$
$$CC_{max} = \sqrt{r - 1} / r$$

In this investigation «meaningful unit» is « clause». That may be in many cases it decreases to bit.

Table1: considering trust and flowing of using materials

row	capa	P
1	0/362	0/000
2	0/632	0/001
3	0/334	0/000
4	0/580	0/000
5	0/645	0/000
6	0/552	0/000
7	0/431	0/000
8	0/687	0/000
9	0/387	0/000
10	0/553	0/000
11	0/387	0/001
12	0/491	0/000
13	0/788	0/000

14	-	-
15	0/338	0/000
16	0/348	0/000
17	0/481	0/000
18	0/587	0/000
19	0/570	0/000
20	0/589	0/000
21	0/579	0/000
22	0/462	0/000
23	0/689	0/000
24	0/423	0/000
25	0/553	0/000

As per table 1, because the amount of P is smaller than 0.05, our using materials has trust and flowing. Also, in the fourth category, the variation view of assessors is not including flowing, so it has been eliminated from this study. First, popular approaches in psychology are examined with reference to the definitions they provide for the normal human.

Table 2. Characteristics of the normal human from the viewpoint of psychologists:

Rajers	Gestalt	Existential
Preparing oneself for new experiences	Believing in oneself	Adapting to change
Self-confidence	Finding a community	Having the meanings in life
Existential life	Not rejecting one's parents	Self-awareness
Freedom of selection	Not dwelling in the past	Freedom
Creativity	Being courageous	Responsibility
Mask disintegration	Accepting a degree	Having meaningful

	of risk	relationships with others
Self-acceptance	Accepting oneself	Coming along with loneliness and relationship with others
Accepting self real	Rebutting masks	Outspeak with environment
Developing intelligence	Living in the present	Outspeak with self
Living in the present	Responsibility	Outspeak with others
Taking on new projects	Engaging in self-improvement	Provide personal genius
		Having venture in life
Adler	Freud	Cognitive and behavioral
Responsibility	Having sexual personality	Being logical
Attempting to reach one's potential	Non escaping of rectum personality	Using logic to solve problems
Individual entirety	Analyzing of pre Setubal's conflicts	Accepting criticism
Skills	Developing skills	Accepting the inevitable
Demission sensation	Humility	Awareness of one's limits
Self creative	Self esteem	Enjoying new experiences
Social penchant	humanism	Having reasonable expectations
Jointing to essential requirements and best social ideal	benevolence	

delighted	Having a social life	
providence	Being consistent	
Cooperation		
Seeing himself at the others level		
Freedom		
Effacing on environmental and social situation		

In other step, we gather the viewpoints of psychologists, which listed in the below table:

Table3. The qualities of the normal human being according to psychologists

Row	Criteria
1	The normal human shows initiative
2	The normal human knows him or her self and his or her abilities
3	The normal human has goals and plans
4	The normal human is free
5	The normal human doesn't lie
6	The normal human is social
7	The normal human always tries to improve his or her talents
8	The normal human lives in the present
9	The normal human is creative
10	The normal human is responsible
11	The normal human is not proud
12	The normal human is logical
13	The normal human is flexible
14	The normal human is not queasy
15	The normal human solves conflict
16	The normal human is able to work
17	The normal human is generous

After examine psychologists' viewpoints, we consider Rumi's viewpoint regarding the normal human, which is listed in following table. Rumi's criteria refer to the complete person. For the purposes of this study, in light of the differences between theosophy and psychology, we call the complete person the normal person.

Table 4. Criteria of normal person in the Rumi's viewpoint:

Row	Criteria
1	The normal human always has a relationship with God
2	The normal human has great power
3	The normal human is clear-sighted
4	The normal human is conscious
5	The normal human has good insight
6	The normal human is willing to discover the secrets
7	The normal human is wise
8	The normal human is free
9	The normal human is a humanitarian
10	The normal human is a perfectionist
11	The normal human is noble
12	The normal human has antonym quality
13	The normal human is good-hearted
14	The normal human is not easily identified
15	The normal human is in love
16	The normal human is a leader

In the next step, we Umlauted Rumi's and the psychologists' definitions. The assessors were given the two sets of definitions, without knowing which was which, and were asked to compare them.

Table 5. The characteristics of the normal person according to Rumi and psychologists (this form was given to the assessors.)

Row	Classification	Short definition
1	Self-awareness about oneself and one's abilities	Awareness of one's existence and work
2	Power	Possessing the ability to do something, or to have an effect on others
3	Having a sense of purpose	Goal: something you plan to attain. Plan: a process used to complete work
4	Clear-sightedness	Having good insight, the ability to perceive the motivation for and outcomes of events, wise, intellectual
5	Freedom	The quality of being free, without constraints, freedom from slavery, acting according to one's own volition
6	awareness	Having awareness, sagacity, paying sufficient attention to events
7	Gentry	Truthful with oneself and others
8	Being social	Having the ability to love with others in society, interested in associating with others, interested in human and social issues
9	Being willing to discover the secrets	Making known something that is secret, making an effort to become aware of something
10	Reaching one's potential	Remunerating in all dimension
11	Having wisdom	To act wisely, to have good

		reasons for one's actions
12	Living in the present	To attend to one's current situation
13	Being innovative	The process of creating new things
14	Perfectionism	Perfection refers to the best possible behavior, the avoidance of sin
15	Responsibility	Ability to acknowledge one's own behavior
16	Being logical	Having sound thought processes
17	antonym quality	Having ,or that 2 antonym quality
18	Good-heartedness	Having the ability to forgive the mistakes of others.
19	Being unknown	Not being known
20	Don't existing conflict	A situation in which everything is in its place
21	Being in love	Having strong feelings for someone
22	Being a leader	Showing others the way
23	Generosity	Being open and generous with others
24	Being adventurous	Being willing to do many things
25	Connected to God	Having a permanent relationship with God
26	Non-obsessive	Do not repeatedly have the same thoughts

Masnavi was reviewed for sections that refer to the normal characteristics of the human. These were listed and provided to the assessors, who were asked to review each criterion and compare it.

Findings

The assessors find that the *Masnavi* focuses more on one's "relationship with God," and does not specify "non-obsessive." Since that characteristic is not story like, it has been omitted from the table.

Table 6. Distribution and percentage of selected categories by assessors

Row	Classification	Distribution	Percent
1	Relationship with god	54	63.5
2	Being unknown	32	37.6
3	Clear-sightedness	32	37.6
4	Wisdom	31	36.5
5	Power	31	36.5
6	Awareness	30	35.3
7	Freedom	20	23.5
8	Self-awareness (about one's abilities)	19	22.4
9	Having purpose and plans	16	18.8
10	Being social	14	16.5
11	Perfectionism	14	16.5
12	Antonym quality	14	16.5
13	Willingness to discover secrets	11	12.9
14	Good-hearted	11	12.9
15	Noble	10	11.8
16	Responsible	9	10.6
17	Logical	9	10.6
18	Defuses conflicts	9	10.6
19	Leadership	9	10.6
20	Generosity	9	10.6
21	Being in love	7	8.2

22	Adventurous	7	8.2
23	Innovative	6	7.1
24	Reaching one's potential	5	5.9
25	Living in the present	3	3.5
26	Non-obsessive	0	100

Table 7 Attitudes selected by assessors

Row	Criteria	Distribution	Percent
1	Rumi	84	98.8
2	Existential	65	76.5
3	Rajers	61	71.8
4	Gestalt	51	57.6
5	Adler	49	56.6
6	Cognitive and behavioral	40	47.1
7	Freud	39	45.9

This table states the distribution and percentage of different definitions in the view of the assessors.

We can conclude that Rumi's criteria were selected most often by the assessors. They believe that most of the extracts refer to criteria listed by Rumi. That it is to be expected, because the excerpts were extracted from *Masnavi*. After Rumi, existential approaches, Rajez, Ghashtalt, Adler, cognitive and behavioral approaches, and Freud are listed in descending order. According to the above table, existentialism is most similar to Rumi's description of the normal human, whereas cognitive behavioral approaches attitude are the least similar. From this we may conclude that existential approaches are most relevant to Iranian culture, and thus may prove most effective in that context.

Discussion and Conclusion

This section lists the results of this study, examines them in detail, and considers their significance.

Row	Categories	Transcription
1	Being powerful, being aware of oneself and one's abilities	Power is the ability to do something. A lack of knowledge of one's abilities and facilities is problematic. Self-awareness is very meaningful. It allows one to exert control over oneself, and over others.
2	Awareness of one's abilities and limits	When we recognize our abilities and limitations, our way will shine. A person with self-awareness is tolerant and accepting.
3	Being creative	Creativity has a direct relationship with power. We can't image a person who is creative without being powerful. Actually ability is the pedestal of creativity. So these two criteria are interconnected. According to a philosophical rule, things don't lack of things. Means that it is devoid of things. And is not able to create something and give it to others.
4	Responsibility	Performing different is based on power. A person should accept responsibility for the results of his or her behavior. Responsibility is a dimension of power. A powerful person accepts the results of his or her actions. To fail to do this is to be incompetent. Others respect a person who is

		responsible. Our religions emphasizes responsibility – we are punished or rewarded for our actions.
5	Power and antonym quality	Person's antonym quality shows his wisdom, awareness, Contrivance and power. Our religion offers examples of such people. For instance, the prophet of Islam was strict and righteous, but also kind. These dimensions in a person show his caution. That is able to recognize a antonym quality in the same situation. Here he need to powerfulness to indicate his recognitions.
6	Power and relationship with God	God is the source of kindness and absolute power. God's power is found in all of creation, but especially in the human being. Because humans have free will, and can choose to succeed or to fail, they choose their relationship with God.
7	Perspective and awareness	To have perspective is to be aware of the results of one's actions, and to have a deep understanding of world events.
8	Perspective and benevolence	A person with perspective knows that benevolence is the most important of all the qualities.
9	Freedom and good-heartedness	Freedom means the ability to avoid entrapment – to act and to choose without obstacles. A person is free with respect to his or her own conscience. A good-hearted person can avoid what is useless to him, and can choose his own path.

10	Awareness and wisdom	The behavior of a wise person is scholarly, and demonstrates a high level of awareness. A wise person can analyze and understand events.
11	Awareness and leadership	An intelligent person knows that human beings need instructions to improve themselves and their condition. A leader is one who teaches others the best way. Someone with awareness knows that he or she needs a good leader. A great deal of awareness allows one to become a leader.
12	Noble behavior and avoiding conflict	A person with various conflicts uses defense mechanisms to reduce his stress. These mechanisms can lead to inconsistencies. To be noble is to be honest to oneself. The prerequisite for this is self-acceptance and a lack of internal conflict.
13	Noble leadership	Gentry are point of growth. That hear a leader is needed In solving conflicts, and also a Gentry person can grow on higher level. That hears he need to an awareness person.
14	Sociability and benevolence	A person that is interested in humanity is social. He thinks about the happiness of others. He does everything that he is able to do for others. He becomes happy through making others happy.
15	Supporting one's talents	Benevolence affects in human flourishing in two ways: first, in order to flourish, one must experience

	through benevolence	benevolence from others. Benevolence is the most important quality. And second, according of existence law will get more than thing that he gift. So Flourishing is easier for him.
16	Wisdom and responsibility	Someone who acts wisely is responsible, because responsibility is based on wisdom. Do a responsibility person is high wisdom person.
17	Sociability and good-heartedness	Life is difficult. Some people bother other people. Some people abuse others, and in the case that the problems are important, some especial organs consider them, but sometime these cases are among people, among groups. In this situation, if a person can't ignore others' mistakes, his life in that society is hard. And because human are social, connection to one's family, school, community, and friends is important.
18	Living in the present Conflict quality	Living in the present means that previous problems are left in the past. This person pays attention to present, and thinks about today's issues. He grows from previous experiences. In various situations, he recognizes the best course of action. He learns from past experiences. So this provides different approaches in various times for him.
19		It is clear that creativity requires forgetting the past and moving on. while there isn't any awareness about

	Creativity and courageousness	this progress. There are many obstacles to this, including general thoughts, various intolerances, and ambiguity of pioneer war. A person must learn to overcome these difficulties. Such a person is creative.
20	Perfectionism Being in love	Humans have strong tendencies to grow and become more perfect. So a person who is in love is becoming more perfect. Love is a tool to help us grow. It provides essential strength; it is a journey rather than a destination. On the other hand, perfect people usually walk in love. So love and perfectionist has to means various dependents. Love and perfection are good and clean.
21	Responsibility and bountifulness	A person who is bountiful is responsibility for others. This person can't ignore the problems of others. While he doesn't pay attention to them. A responsible person does everything he can for others. And he thinks that it is his duty to act in this way.
22	Good-hearted avoidance of conflict	In many cases, inability is the result of internal conflict. There are various kinds of conflicts. Some time we think that our value is depend on especial situations. Sometimes we limit ourselves in such situation. If somebody exceeds, we think he can bother us, and we can't forgive him. On the other hand, such irritations will increase our internal conflicts. And

		our situation becomes more difficult. But this person who solve his conflicts, earn suitable universalization, he don't think that their values are related to something.
23	Good-hearted leadership	A person who is good-hearted forgives others their mistakes. If his leader makes any mistake, he will not abandon him. But a person that can't forgive anyone, he tenderize people with small mistakes. With respect to leadership, a leader who forgives the mistakes of his followers will gather more people around him. Will he won't forgive her. And members accept him.
24	Good-hearted relationship with God	A relationship with God makes one more like God. This relation will develop the human spirit. This person saw the world small. He can forgive others easily, because God is generous. On the other hand, this person's appearance is similar to God's. Such people have large spirits.
25	Courageousness in one's relation with God	One's relation with God influences all of one's behavior and speech, and makes one act in a way that is beneficial for others. Otherwise, he is not valuable to others, and his values don't have value for others. A person who has a relationship with God performs something that others don't know about them. Hard tasks are easy for him, because he is so strong. That surprises others. We know many such people – for

		example, Imam Hussein.
26	Logic and responsibility	These two characteristics are interconnected. issues need together and logically are understandable, and doing everything need to responsibility. A person who acts wisely is responsible.
27	Wisdom and defusing conflict	Conflict has an effect on thoughts and behavior. Something that is unusual seems usual for person that has interred personal problems. In this situation, this person makes correct decision. So thinking is needed to solve problems.
28	Sociality and logic	Living in a society requires logic. On the other hand, behavior, expectation, willing and person's duty should be acceptable for person and the people around him.

According to these findings and results, we can answer these questions:

1. Did Rumi declare criteria for the definitions of normalcy and abnormality which differ from those found in experimental psychology?

Yes. Rumi declared the following criteria as essential for human growth:

Row	Criteria
1	The normal human always has a relationship with God
2	The normal human has great power
3	The normal human is clear-sighted
4	The normal human is conscious

5	The normal human has a better insight than others
6	The normal human is willing to discover secrets
7	The normal human has wisdom
8	The normal human is free
9	The normal human is a humanitarian
10	The normal human is a perfectionist
11	The normal human is noble
12	The normal human has antonym quality
13	The normal human is good-hearted
14	The normal human is not easily identified
15	The normal human is in love
16	The normal human is a leader

2. These are the criteria offered in Rumi's poems for the abnormal human:
Rumi classified humanity into three groups.

1. The sublime human. 2. The Farvadin human. 3. The medial human.
The Farvadin human is an abnormal person. These are their characteristics: they avoid celestial qualities, they have a decreased capacity for accepting good qualities, they are greedy and carnal. They don't hear the right things. Finally, because they don't have human qualities, they are called animals.

3. Are there any similarities between Rumi's description of the normal human and psychologists' descriptions of abnormality and normality?
Yes. As the assessors have shown, there are many similarities.

4. Are there any differences between Rumi's approach and the psychologists' approaches to abnormality and normality?

Yes. In the author's view, the main difference between Rumi's account and the psychologists' description is idealism in all situation. Rumi says that normal people have close relationships with God. He says that humans have no goodness without God. Better human efforts are valuable. That called evolution. Psychologists consider humans alone, and they do not account for God. We can conclude that the values of Rumi and psychologists are different: of course, Rumi is wise, and the psychologists are scientific. So they don't fit well together. According to this investigation, Rumi differs significantly from Western psychologists. In comparing western science with Iranian civilization and religion, they are recognized. We hope that Iranian culture can be further appreciated.

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