CONCEPTS OF LOVE AND SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

by

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ABSTRACT

In response to the question, "What is Love," I examined selected concepts of love in the Western tradition with the purpose of promoting a better understanding of love. While my primary source was the history of ideas, my approach was pluralistic in the sense that I referred to arguments and insights of a number of disciplines, among them philosophy, religion and science. The findings indicate that Western concepts of love present a wide spectrum of ideas which are supported by values and beliefs of time and place and respond to a variety of human needs and desires. I introduced a different concept of love, which I named "holistic love." Finally, I encouraged educators to teach concepts of love either as a part of other disciplines: science, medicine and philosophy, for example, as well as in courses on literature, visual art, music and others, or as a separate program. From the perspectives of humanistic adult education and values education I offered practical suggestions as to how such a program might be approached.

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INTRODUCTION

> I once came across a book by a learned man in which the usefulness of salt was made the subject of a wonderful panegyric, and you could find plenty of other things that have received similar treatment; but the pity is that, while such subjects as these have had immense pains bestowed on them, nobody to this day has had the courage to praise Love in such terms as he deserves.[1]

From pre-history to the present day, human beings have recognized the power of love. Religions have built their beliefs on love; scholars have attempted to decipher its nature, and lovers and poets alike have been inspired by its pull.

In the present late twentieth century, the Western world is saturated with love. From popular television, pop-music, magazines and commercial billboards, love is thrust upon us from all directions. We look, we read, we listen, for we too are fascinated by love. And yet, surrounded by "love" we know that this is debased love, that there is more to love than the suggestive images to which we are exposed.

But understanding "true" love is not easy. We fall in love and it is a wonderful feeling. It virtually lifts us off our feet and opens the door to exalted being. Irresistibly pulled by its force we eagerly "marry for love" and expect to "live happily ever after," for after all, marriage is "a dance on roses" and "love conquers all." These ideas are all deeply imbedded in our popular culture. But while they suggest that the love a young man and

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[1]Plato, The Symposium, trans. Walter Hamilton (New York, London: Penguin Books 1951, repr. 1980), 40.

woman feel for each other on the wedding day will last forever, divorce statistics tell a different story. Even though the bride and groom approach their life together with sincerity and good will, something often goes terribly wrong. In the early 1990s more than forty percent of all marriages in Canada are dissolved in divorce.[2] So, while we rightly dismiss the commercial varieties of love, the love we do believe in often lets us down, and this suggests that we do not understand the nature of love very well.

This dissertation deals with love in the Western world as it has been developed into distinct concepts and recorded in the history of ideas from mythology to the present day. Western love, however, does not represent a unified point of view with regard to gender and class. Quite the opposite is true. Throughout the history of love there has been a diversity of views and these often clash. I will deal with them further in later chapters. Furthermore, I am aware that few students in any educational setting share a common Western heritage and that they generally represent a global diversity of cultures. It is important that educators are sensitive to this fact and that they appreciate the unique and very valuable comments and insights on love from outside the Western tradition which may be offered by these students.

The purpose of this dissertation is to promote a better understanding of love which can help us act more wisely and thereby strengthen ourselves and our relationships to each other and to the human world. I shall not offer a definition of love. I have chosen instead to allow each concept to "speak for itself" by approaching it from the perspective of the

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[2]Calculated from Statistics Canada (Vital Statistics Publications, Canadian Centre for Health Information, 1993), 41.

open-ended question, "What is love?" Needless to say, this question is not new. It has been posed throughout the history of ideas by countless others far more learned and wise than I. The answers have shifted and changed according to individual inclinations within the context and cultural limitations of time and place. While a number of the concepts have endured in whole or in part and continue to influence our perceptions of love, others seem to be forgotten.

My primary source is the history of ideas but my approach is pluralistic in the sense that I will draw on arguments and insights of others in a number of disciplines, among them philosophy, religion and science as well as my personal views.

Although desirable, the restrictions imposed on the length of a dissertation do not permit a detailed account of all the concepts of love in the Western world. I will focus on those concepts which seem to me to be particularly significant.

My research indicated that most writers focus on a concept of love in which they have a particular interest. It meant that books and articles on religious love were written by those who were positively inclined towards a religious faith. This presented a problem for me because I detected a tendency among the writers to support and promote a religious perspective which, as an outsider, i.e., without religious faith, I could not accept.

When I discovered the writings by Irving Singer I immediately felt as if I received a breath of fresh air.[3] The reason was that Singer writes from an outsider's perspective and without the tendentiousness of religious writers. In my research I did not discover any other writer in the field who, like Singer, wrote from the outside. Although I did not

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[3]See LIST OF REFERENCES.

always agree with his views, his thoughts frequently complemented my own lines of thinking. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly in the context of this dissertation, Singer is the only philosopher who has written a comprehensive history of love. I found his knowledge, insight and writings in general to be not only thorough and in depth, but even inexhaustible. I have quoted his writings extensively, especially in the areas of religious love. I realize that this may reflect a limitation in my study. I agree that it would have been desirable and preferable, even the proper thing to do, to include as many different perspectives on religious love from outside the tradition and from a variety of different writers as possible. I did not find them. I doubt they exist. So, what may be conceived as a limitation in my study may reflect a deeper problem, namely, a paucity of research on religious love from an outsider's perspective.

The mythological Eros is the topic of CHAPTER 1. Eros represents the earliest concept of love in the Western world, love as a universal life force, as well as human sexual love. In CHAPTER 2, I deal with Eros in Plato's *Symposium*. Plato builds on, but moves far beyond, ideas in mythology and introduces an intellectual concept of love, namely, love of eternal forms of goodness and beauty. The focus of CHAPTER 3 is on the concept of nomos in the Old Testament. Nomos represents the Jewish response to God's love for the Jewish people, obedience to the law and submission of the human will to the will of God. CHAPTER 4 deals with the Christian concept of love, agapē, God's perfect love for humanity, as well as agapē in its secular interpretation as compassionate, self-sacrificial, human love. CHAPTER 5 features courtly love in the twelfth century. One expression of courtly love reflects Plato's ideas on love as desire for perfection which can

only be achieved in an hypothetical realm beyond the human world. The lover in courtly love, however, worships and strives towards the perfection he perceives in a lady of the nobility. A different version of courtly love celebrates human sexual love between equals. CHAPTER 6 is concerned with romantic love which I describe in three phases: "passionate love," "being in love" and "loving." In this chapter I also discuss love and marriage through history and today. CHAPTER 7 is an overview of the various concepts I presented in the previous chapters. I suggest a number of conclusions about love in the history of the Western world and introduce a different concept of love which has not previously been promoted. I call this concept "holistic love." In a final chapter, CHAPTER 8, I suggests ways in which educators can become involved in the teaching of concepts of love. From the perspectives of humanistic as well as values education, I offer concrete suggestions for such a program.

CHAPTER I

EROS

Eros is a very ancient concept of love dating back well over two thousand years. It originates in the regions bordering on the north-eastern Mediterranean, in the parts we now call Greece. Over time the concept has been transformed, and celebrated or vilified in accordance with the prevailing world view of a particular time and place. In the late twentieth century, "Eros" and its derivative "erotic" evoke images of sexual excitement and desire, and certainly both are part of the concept. But, as I hope to show, the concept is much richer than the present interpretation would suggest. With reference to evidence in myths, poetry and the arts[1] I will trace the early development of the concept and point to the aspects of Eros we have retained and those we have forgotten, ignored or left behind.

We can roughly divide the history of the idea into three phases: *the mythical*, before the eighth century B.C.; *the Olympian*, from around the eighth century; and *the classical*, beginning about the fifth century.

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[1]Elmer Suhr, Before Olympos (New York: Prometheus Books, 1967) is an excellent source for artistic representations of Eros. See also John Boardman and Eugenio La Rocca, Eros in Greece (London: John Murray, 1978).

The Mythical Phase

The mythical phase belongs to pre-history by which we understand the early period before there was written language. This is the oral stage of human history, when knowledge and tribal wisdom were passed on by word of mouth. Human tribes were part of the natural world and depended on plants and animal life for their survival. They observed and learned to read the signs of nature, and they attributed its mysterious forces to the presence of gods. Their world included both seen and unseen realities and, according to Thales, the whole world was full of gods. They were *really* there.[2] The presence and actions of the gods were interpreted in stories and myths which circulated widely and in many different forms. But the central themes were always the same. They told the early humans what was important for them to know.[3]

In a society dominated by scientific truth, such as the present Western world, it is tempting to dismiss myths out of hand. Indeed, from our perspective, myth and science, one dealing with "beliefs" and the other with "facts," have little in common. However, in primitive societies the gods *were* facts of life. Northrop Frye explains that,

> Mythology is not a datum but a factum of human existence: it belongs to the world of culture and civilization that man has made and still inhabits. As a god is a metaphor identifying a personality and an element of nature, solar myths or star myths or vegetation myths may suggest something of a primitive form of science.[4]

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[2]Mircea Eliade, Myth and Reality (New York: Harper & Row, 1963; Harper Torch Books, 1968), 6.

[3]Northrop Frye, The Great Code. The Bible and Literature (New York, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), 33.

[4]Ibid., 37.

In the words of Anthony Walsh, myths were "projections of our hunger to know,"[5] and this is the same role science has today. Both myth and science are based on observation. They differ only in the manner in which they interpret the facts. Eros was one of the unseen realities, the very life force of the universe. His power, energy and creativity brought and sustained all life. In Boeotia, the early Thespians worshipped Eros in the form of an unwrought stone.[6]

In addition to fragments of pottery and other artifacts, the Greek poet Hesiod is our main source of knowledge of the early concept of Eros. He wrote *The Theogony* towards the end of the eighth century. Alphabetic writing had been introduced in Greece shortly before and *The Theogony* is possibly the oldest surviving example of this form of writing in the Western world.[7] In his books, Hesiod drew on the long and rich oral tradition created by his ancestors. In *The Theogony* he mapped out the lineage and hierarchy of the gods and recorded the stories and myths that were familiar to him. But since he could only write about the things he knew, we do not know what he missed. So, our present day knowledge about pre-historic Greek beliefs likely represents only a small fraction of their richness and variety. But once written down the myth we have preserved became stereotyped expressions of early beliefs.

We are immediately alerted to the immense importance the early Greeks attached

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[5]Anthony Walsh, The Science of Love (New York: Prometheus Books, 1991), 21.

[6]Pausanias LX, 27, l. Quoted in W. K. C. Guthrie, The Greeks and Their Gods (Boston: Beacon Press, 1951, repr. 1962), 21. See also Suhr, Before, 135.

[7]Richard S. Caldwell, Hesiod's Theogony (Cambridge: Focus Information Group, 1987), 1.

to Eros. According to Hesiod, he was one of the first gods to appear. Parmenides calls him the first created god of the cosmos,[8] while the Orphics claim that Eros sprang out of the world egg.[9] Eros was related to the sun, the moon, and the serpent. In the early tribal societies these were all powerful symbols of life energy and creativity. The sun was the most important element in the heavens,[10] the very life force of the universe. The light and warmth of the sun's rays together with the rain and the wind fertilized the soil and caused plants to develop and grow. Although the sun set in the evening, it did not vanish or die but returned in the morning and brought with it life and renewal. Artistic fragments from this early period of human history confirm that Eros shared in all of the sun's attributes. At this time, the bow and arrow in the hands of Eros symbolized his power to deliver the sun's rays to fertilize the soil.[11] Because of its life-giving properties, we still identify the sun with love. Thus, when George Chapman writes that, "Love is nature's second sun,"[12] and when the pop-artist sings "You are my sunshine," both have a parallel with the early interpretation of Eros and testify to the truth of the original imagery.

The moon was the domain of the goddess Aphrodite. It was thought to influence the development of the embryo. Eros shared in this power, and both he and Aphrodite

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[8]David Gallop, Parmenides of Elea (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 83, fragment 13.

[9]J. R. Watmough, Orphism (Cambridge: University Press, 1934), 56.

[10]Suhr, Before, 111.

[11]Ibid., 120-139.

[12]Walsh, Science, 15.

became spinners of the thread of life. The serpent also symbolized the life force because it sheds its skin only to be born again. Eros, too, had this power to renew life. But we do not know how the concept of Eros came to be associated in mythology with the Greek word for love.[13]

In the mythical phase, Eros, like the sun, was a cosmic principle, a vital life force, and death was not part of his nature. He was the power and energy on which depended all new creation, all growth and all life forms. As such, the concept of Eros was inclusive. Because of his many life-giving attributes, Eros was loved more than any other god.

The Olympian Phase

The further, early development of the Eros concept, we recognize today, describes Eros as a *male* god. His anthropomorphic features were likely developed on Greek soil where the earliest known Eros statue was made by Praxiteles in the fourth century.[14] It shows Eros as a male youth in his prime. However, at about the same time, Alexis of Thurie notes that Eros is "neither male nor female,"[15] and other artists portray him as a bisexual being.[16] So, although I refer to Eros as a male god, we should keep in mind that we cannot take the "maleness" of this god for granted. It could very well be a later

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[13]Suhr, Before, 121.

[14]Ibid., 21.

[15]John Maxwell Edmonds, The Fragments of Attic Comedy, II (Ludin: E. J. Brill, 1959), 493.

[16]Suhr, Before, 121.

adaptation in conformity with a male dominated world.

The concept of Eros began to change when Eros was included in the Olympian gods around 800 B.C.. His previous role as a cosmic life force slowly receded, and Eros together with Aphrodite became the main gods of sexual love and beauty. Their roles complemented each other and often overlapped. Eros was now closely associated with Himeros, Pothos and Peitho. Himeros represented desire and was Eros' double, while Pothos was yearning love. Peitho stood for persuasion[17] and he, according to Pindar, held the secret keys to love.[18] Thus human love was firmly rooted in the gods and, as a consequence, humans could participate in the divine through sexual love. Artistic fragments reveal that human sexuality was joyfully celebrated: during festivals in honour of Eros, giant phalli were carried in procession through the countryside,[19] monumental sex organs were featured in various religious contexts and in temple decorations, and explicit scenes depict love-making, "solitary, in pairs or groups, men together or with girls."[20] In the words of John Boardman and Eugenio La Rocca, these are all presented, "with a smile not a snigger, designed neither to excite nor to embarrass."[21]

Hesiod describes Eros as a "limb-weakener, who conquers the mind and sensible

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[17]John Boardman and Eugenio La Rocca, Eros in Greece (London: John Murray, 1978), 24.

[18]Ibid., 20.

[19]Ibid., 38.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid., 65.

thought in the breasts of all gods and men."[22] Ovid, in the fourth century, writes: "[Cupid] from his arrow-bearing quiver plucked two shafts of opposite effects; one routs love, the other brings it on."[23] In the same century, a bow and arrow in the hands of Eros symbolized his power to evoke desire in one person for another. Eros was frequently shown with wings which were thought to be charged with pneuma, the power present in the light and the wind. But Alexis of Thurie protested this flight of the artistic imagination:

> If we can trust a saying of the wise
> Not love himself but lovers are winged things;
> False are the colours under which he flies,
> And it's through ignorance art gives him wings.[24]

As I interpret Alexis, Eros is larger than any image we can create of him. And yet, the wings of Eros are important. Eventually, pneuma became synonymous with spirit or soul.[25] The wings, then, indicate an early, and I feel, very interesting understanding of the interdependence of love, soul and/or spirit.

Eros was associated only with the nobler aspirations of love. The baser elements, indiscriminate copulation for the sake of need gratification, were never part of his nature. They were represented by animals and mythical creatures: Centaurs, horses with human torsos, symbolized animal passion; bulls stood for virility, and satyrs portrayed human lust.

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[22]Caldwell, Hesiod's, 115, lines 120-122.

[23]Ovid, Metamorphoses I-IV, ed. and trans. D. E. Hill (Illinois: Bolchezy -Carducci Publ. Inc., 1985), verse 470-473.

[24]Edmonds, Fragments, 385.

[25]Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, Massachusetts: G. & C. Merriam Company), 653.

In the Olympian phase we gradually lose the grandeur of Eros of the mythical age. It is especially noteworthy that Eros as the life-giving, powerful and creative god had to give way to Eros with a diminished function as a god of human sexual love.

The Classical Phase

In spite of the invention of alphabetic writing, Greece remained mainly an oral society until the fifth century and, even then, literacy was limited to a privileged class, and mostly to males. This meant that old and new ideas, myth and rational thought, as well as earlier and newly developed concepts of Eros continued to overlap widely.[26]

In the fifth century, early stirrings in science and philosophy began to change the way the ancient Greeks looked at the world. Around this time, Anaxagoras wondered about the course of the planets while Hippocrates argued that disease (epilepsy) had natural causes, and that its "supposed divine origin is due to men's inexperience."[27] As society changed, the elite lost interest in the divine history and no longer believed in the myths, although many still claimed to believe in the gods. Northrop Frye explains that,

> Mythology, because of its sacrosanct nature, is likely to persist in a society in inorganic ways, and so comes to make assertions or assumptions about the order of nature that conflict with what the actual observation of that order suggests. When this happens, the mythological explanation has to be replaced by a scientific

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[26]Rosalind Thomas, Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 2; Walter Ong, Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word (New York: Methuen, 1982), 34.

[27]Finley Hooper, Greek Realities. Life and Thought in Ancient Greece (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1967, repr. 1982), 262-263.

one.[28]

With the gradual shift in world view, the role of Eros changed as well. In addition to his presence in sexual love, he was commonly seen in domestic situations, assisting an Athenian bride, fastening Aphrodite's sandal.[29] This may indicate an expansion of his role in human matters to include care and concern expressed as family and friendship love. Around this time Eros also became a *symbolic* figure for life in death,[30] and may now appear as a statue in burial settings.[31] This development seems to indicate that the later Greeks no longer believed that Eros, although invisible, was actually physically present.

The gradual change in the importance of Eros continued towards the second and first centuries. His physical image became younger until, towards the beginning of the present calender, he became a baby cherub. This image is in sharp contrast to the earlier statue made by Praxiteles and seems to tell us that Eros is basically immature and, perhaps, innocent.

Over the span of a few hundred years, the nature and role of Eros changed dramatically in tune with concurrent changes in the Greek view of the world. At the dawn of Western civilization, Eros was a magnificent god, a vibrant and sacred cosmic principle, the very life force of the universe. He represented the power, energy and creativity of the

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[28]Frye, Code, 38.

[29]Boardman and La Rocca, Eros, 13.

[30]Suhr, Before, 125.

[31]Boardman and La Rocca, Eros, 59-62.

sun, the moon and the serpent, and became a spinner of the thread of life. Eros was *inclusive* in the sense that he was responsible for the vitality and growth of *all* life forms, including human beings as part of nature.

When Eros became an Olympian god, his cosmic role faded in favour of a new responsibility for human, sexual love. This concept of Eros has reverberated through the centuries and this is the one with which we are most familiar today. But although human sexual love was honoured early in human history, it has since been vilified and subjected to rules and regulations, especially by our religious tradition. It is now difficult to perceive a time in history when human sexuality was joyfully accepted and rightfully celebrated. So deeply influenced have we been by the Christian view of sexuality.

Research and Ideas Which Might Support the Mythological Concept of Eros

We rarely, if ever, associate Eros with a cosmic life force or with life in death, and care and concern are not immediately recognized as part of his nature. And yet, the vitality of human life itself is evidence of the importance of the mythological Eros, of the life force, its power, energy and creativity.

Probably the most striking evidence was first reported by John Bowlby. In *Child Care and the Growth of Love*,[32] Bowlby reports that infants deprived of their mother's love fail to prosper and many of them suffer ill effects that can have far reaching and long

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[32]John Bowlby, Child Care and the Growth of Love (Harmondsworth, England: Pelican Books, 1953; Penguin Books, 1965).

lasting effects.[33]

Bowlby did most of his research on institutionalized infants who had little or no opportunity to interact with a mother or mother substitute. Even though the standard of physical care was high, his findings showed that young infants became listless, quiet, unhappy and unresponsive when separated from their mothers, and older infants showed signs of sadness, apprehension and depression. They withdrew from human contact, could not sleep, lost their appetite and suffered a drop in general development. Reunion with their mothers could result in a rapid and dramatic improvement in terms of both behaviour and intellectual functioning. Bowlby quotes the case of an institutionalized, four month old boy. He weighed less than he did when he was born. His condition was critical:

> His appearance was that of a pale, wrinkled old man. His breathing was so weak and superficial that it seemed as though he might stop breathing at any moment. When seen twenty-four hours after he had been at home he was cooing and smiling. Though no change had been made in his diet he started to gain weight promptly and by the end of the first year his weight was well within normal range. He appeared to be in every way a normal child.[34]

Although not all children reacted in quite the same way, follow-up studies on older children who were deprived of love in infancy reveal that they, generally, were emotionally inaccessible. They showed no emotional response to situations where it would normally be expected and were incapable of caring for others. Their relationships were superficial and their ability to form and maintain friendships was impaired.[35] The findings also suggest that

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[33]Ibid., 17.

[34]Ibid., 26.

[35]Ibid., 36-52.

children who were deprived of mother's love in infancy themselves became neglectful mothers.[36] In the words of Mary Ainsworth, "Mother-love in infancy and childhood is as important for mental health as are vitamins and proteins for physical health."[37]

The research on maternal deprivation confirms that mother's love[38] is a vital life force. Without it, an infant will not thrive. The life force in each individual infant must be lovingly nurtured from birth, not only for the sake of survival, but also so that the infant may learn how to love.

Henry Bergson, in the early part of the twentieth century, was intrigued by the idea of a universal life force. Although he did not mention Eros, Bergson[39] postulated a vital principle inherent in all living organisms.[40] He concedes that the term "vital principle" may not explain much, but it is at least "a sort of label affixed to our ignorance, so as to remind us of this occasionally." Bergson argues that individual organisms are not sufficiently independent nor sufficiently cut off from other organisms to claim a vital principle of their own. Even the most highly developed living forms are created and come to life only when the egg from the mother's body is fertilized by the spermatozoa from the father. The

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[36]Ibid., 240.

[37]Ainsworth in Bowlby, Child Care, 240.

[38]Or that of a mother's substitute.

[39]1859-1941.

[40]Henri Bergson, Creative Evolution, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911; Random House, The Modern Library, 1944), 48-50.

creative process, then, connects all organisms to their ancestors, and ultimately to those farthest removed in time. In fact, the principle of life carries us back to the earliest protoplasmic jelly which is "at the root of the genealogical tree of life." And this unites all living forms in "a single indivisible embrace."

While the focus of twentieth century science is not on a cosmic life force, recent discoveries point to genetic components shared by plant, animal and human life. Research in molecular biology reveals that the main atoms of all life are made of carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, sulphur, nitrogen and phosphorus and that all life is based on the same basic cell structure. This research confirms that human beings share in their bodies the same molecules with other mammals, birds, trees and insects and also those of humans that lived before us and now. David Suzuki explains:

> Although science can function only by focusing on parts of nature, the insights we are gaining provide us with a picture that connects us with each other, with all life on the planet and beyond to the rest of the universe. Our place [is] within all of nature.[41]

Scientific research, then, seems to confirm the truth and wisdom expressed in our mythological past, namely, that human beings and the natural world belong together. Nevertheless, although love as a universal life force is an intriguing idea, science has not yet discovered its existence.

As the Western world increasingly relies on scientific evidence to explain

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[41]David Suzuki, "From Star Dust to Basic Cells, Humans are Part of the Web," Globe & Mail, 7 November 1987, D4.

phenomena, the mythological concept of Eros is forgotten. I will return to this concept in a later chapter. Meanwhile, in the mind and hands of the philosopher, Eros is transformed as we shall see when we turn next to Plato's interpretation of the concept.

CHAPTER 2

EROS IN PLATO'S *SYMPOSIUM*[1]

The fifth century B.C. in Greece signalled the rise of the individual and rational thought. Although society as a whole remained dominated by traditional modes of thinking, early philosophers began to question the reality of the Olympian gods. They argued that consciousness was not "out there" but began with man. Athens became a city state, dominated by a leisured, educated class of urban males who spent their days out of doors involved with friends and city life. Females, on the other hand, were largely confined to the home and domesticity and did not have the educational opportunities granted the males. There were few occasions for romantic love and marriage was usually arranged. Males generally thought that females were inferior and necessary solely for the sake of procreation. Only in rare instances were they considered adequate companions.[2] Pederasty, the love of older men for younger boys, was far more satisfying to the elite.

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[1]The Symposium, trans. Walter Hamilton (New York: Penguin Books, 1951, repr. 1980). See also On Homosexuality: *Lysis, Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, trans. Benjamin Jowett; retrans., notes and introduction Eugene O'Connor (New York: Prometheus Books, 1991). In my quotations I have chosen the translation by Hamilton as I find that it is easier to understand than that by Jowett. However, no precise section numbers are available in Hamilton. I therefore refer to both translations.

[2]Aspasia, Pericles' second wife, was an exception. She was beautiful, intelligent, and educated and fully able to satisfy Pericles' desire for both physical and intellectual companionship. See Hooper, Realities, 221.

The towering intellectual figure of the first half of the fourth century was Plato.[3] Even though he urged that women should have equal access to education,[4] he failed to realize that better educated women could make possible a different relationship with them than was the case at the time. In spite of his many progressive ideas in areas of human life and education, Plato simply could not envision women as equals. Therefore, at the highest level, interpersonal love in Plato's works is pederasty. Disagreeable as such an idea may seem to us in the twentieth century, we must remember that pederasty was both acceptable and common at the time. But, more importantly, Plato's theories of love expand far beyond interpersonal relationships and bring together a number of his ideas from other areas of his interests.

The Symposium[5] is a fictional account of a symposium, or drinking party, which took place in 416 B.C. in celebration of Agathon, a writer and historical figure, who had won a literary contest the previous day. This was a party of equals. All those present were literary celebrities in Athens at the time and, except for the flute-girl, all of them were males. Phaedrus, one of the guests, complains that Eros is the only god who has never received proper praise from the poets. He suggests that each of those present give a speech in honour of the god. They all agree and each gives an account of what he cherishes about the god Eros.

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[3]Plato lived from 427 to 347 B.C.

[4]G. M. A. Grube, trans. Plato's Republic (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), 456d.

[5]According to Hamilton, The Symposium, 9, it was written not earlier than 385 B.C.

Of particular interest here are the contribution by Aristophanes and the dialogue between Diotima and Socrates, which I will present in three parts. In the first, I will deal with Aristophanes' speech. The preliminary arguments in the dialogue between Socrates and Diotima follow, and the final part presents the "ascent passage." The chapter continues with a description of the Platonic lover by Thomas Mann and concludes with a commentary.

Aristophanes' Speech

Aristophanes argues that human beings are incomplete and that love is the desire and pursuit of that which will make us whole. He chooses an ancient myth to illustrate his point. In the beginning of time, he tells us, there were three sexes: male, female, and hermaphrodite which had both male and female characteristics. Each was round and whole with two beings in one body and two sets of genitals. Each being had four arms and four legs, one head on a circular neck, and two identical faces turned in opposite directions. These beings were very powerful, high spirited and proud. When they attacked the gods, Zeus in punishment cut them in half to make them weaker and more numerous. He turned their heads to face the cut side so that they could see their wound. This would serve as a warning to them and an inclination to behave better. Ever since that time each half yearned to be joined together again with the half from which it was separated.

When the two original halves happened to meet they would passionately embrace each other and would not let go. They neglected all other needs and perished with hunger. When one of the pair died, the one who was left behind would search for another partner

to replace the one it lost. The new partner could be from any sex. Some would form a good union, but they were not the true halves of a whole. Others, aware of their incompleteness, would continue to search for what they could not find. Eventually there were no more original halves to be found, and the wounded halves failed to thrive.

Zeus felt sorry for them and moved their genitals to the front. Until this time they had been on the outside of the body and sexual love did not exist. Reproduction was by emission on the ground. With the genitals to the front the beings could now reproduce by intercourse between males and females, while males with male partners could satisfy their sexual desire and get on with other things. These encounters gave them intense pleasure, heterosexuals, lesbians and homosexuals alike. They refused to be separated. The joy they felt was not merely physical, "for the soul of each has some longing which it cannot express."[6] But there was always reason to fear that if they did not behave they might be split in two again.

Aristophanes concludes that "It is from this distant epoch, then, that we may date the innate love which human beings feel for one another, the love which restores us to our ancient state by attempting to weld two beings into one and to heal the wounds which humanity suffered."[7] Each of us has a wound. Each of us is always in search of our true half. Those who are halves of men pursue males and, according to Aristophanes, this class of human beings is the best because it is more manly. Everyone would want to be welded

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[6]Hamilton, The Symposium, page 63; Jowett, On Homosexuality, *Symposium*, section 192c.

[7]Hamilton, The Symposium, page 62; Jowett, On Homosexuality, *Symposium*, section 191d.

together with his true half, to be one instead of two, for love is the desire and pursuit of the whole, and happiness is to return to our original state as whole beings.

Aristophanes' myth has circulated in various forms throughout the history of the Western world. It speaks powerfully to human feelings of incompleteness and to the quest for wholeness in life. As such it is a very appealing myth, but it is also problematic. It introduces the seductive idea that if we but find the perfect individual, the only one who can make us whole, we will live happily ever after. By the same token, if we are not successful, we are somehow lost. These are the very sentiments expressed in romantic dreams. But what does wholeness mean in the context of human life? Most psychologists and lay persons alike will agree with Donald Walhout who explains that we feel whole when most of our needs and wants are fulfilled.[8] If this is the case, we can begin to see why Aristophanes' myth does not measure up. For how can we possibly expect that another person in and by him/herself can fulfill all our changing needs and wants of heart, soul, mind and body, the whole of us, forever? Clearly, this is an impossible dream. Besides, a feeling of wholeness is not a permanent state in human life. It cannot be, for it is human nature, i.e., the eros in us, to explore, to expand, to reach out for new experiences. Even when such activity does not satisfy any bodily need, it fulfills other needs, just as important, of heart, of soul or mind.[9] Thus, children who feel secure will typically venture

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[8]Donald Walhout, The Good and the Realm of Values (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978), 43.

[9]Arthur Aron and Elaine N. Aron, Love and the Expansion of Self: Understanding Attraction and Satisfaction (New York: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, 1986), 22.

beyond the safety of mother's embrace and explore their environment,[10] and adults actively look for change in the form of novelty or complexity as well as goals, possibilities or ideas.[11] J. M. E. Moravcsik agrees that

> Our aspirations are not simply to the effect that whatever needs we have, these should be satisfied. Eros is always "other-directed;" i.e., it is for objects of pursuits that lie outside the soul, and the pursuit becomes the pattern along which a human life is organized. Thus . . . eros is what pushes the mind to new investigations.[12]

Eros is restless, this is the nature of the god. A feeling of wholeness is therefore an elusive state which we experience but in fleeting moments. Abraham Maslow calls them "peak experiences." They include "feelings of wholeness, perfection, aliveness, uniqueness, effortlessness, self-sufficiency, and the values of beauty, goodness and truth."[13] In contrast to Aristophanes' claims of eternal happiness in wholeness, when all longing and searching cease, and when over time our essential needs are mostly met, we experience boredom.[14]

See also John P. Zubek, ed., Sensory Deprivation: Fifteen Years of Research (New York: Meredith Corporation, 1969), 446.

[10]Ernest R. Hilgard, Rita L. Atkinson and Richard C. Atkinson, eds. Introduction to Psychology (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1953, repr.1979), 78.

[11]D. Smith, M. King and B. G. Hoebel, "Lateral Hypothalamic Control of Killing. Evidence for a Cholinoceptive Mechanism," Science 167: 900-01.

[12]J. M. E. Moravcsik, "Reason and Eros in the 'Ascent'-Passage of the Symposium," in Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy, eds. John P. Anton and George L. Kustas (Albany: State of New York Press, 1971), 292.

[13]A. H. Maslow, Motivation and Personality (New York: Harper & Row, 1970) summarized in Psychology, eds. Ernest R. Hilgard et al., 395.

[14]D. E. Berlyne, "Information and Motivation," in Human Communication: Theoretical Explorations, ed. Albert Silverstein (New York, London: John Wiley & Sons, 1974), 38.

Thus the "bliss" of a permanent state of wholeness and happiness remains an impossible dream which we keep on dreaming. In the words of John A. Whittaker,

> We change the ends in which we invest our hopes of happiness, sometimes identifying our fulfilment with one thing and sometimes with another. Yet even if we feel that we have made mistakes, overvaluing things like money or fame, we do not abandon the unfocused concern that we originally invested in these things. We have banked fires of passion which might be rekindled at any moment, simply by being invested in new aims. But the passion that we put into these new aims is already inside us waiting to be identified with something new. Such passion, as Kierkegaard said, comes from our interest in eternal or absolute happiness.[15] This kind of happiness cannot be identified with anything in particular, and though it remains something that we can never focus on as a particular goal, we never disown our interest in it. No matter how foolish we may have been in trying to find it in this form or in that--no matter how disappointed we might become in ourselves--we never lose our longing for it.[16]

And so the search goes on throughout our lifetime while we cherish the rare but glorious moments when we feel at one with the universe.

Aristophanes' myth correctly identifies the human feelings of incompleteness and points to Eros as the driving force behind our eternal search for wholeness. As such, it hearkens back to the original Eros concept which recognized the energy, power and creativity present in all of nature and which Plato, below, in his description of desire, acknowledged as the essence of Eros. Aristophanes' myth is mistaken in the solution it offers to the human dilemma. "Reaching out for new experiences," the integral and permanent human need for self-expansion, is not accounted for but it is a need that must

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[15]Søren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, trans. Walter Lowrie, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), see the chapter "Truth is Subjectivity," passim.

[16]John A. Whittaker, "'Agape' and Self-love," in The Love Commandment, eds. Edmund N. Santurri and William Werpelowski (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1992), 231.

be accommodated if we are to live a full life.

The Dialogue Between Socrates and Diotima

The preliminary arguments in the dialogue between Socrates and Diotima are preceded by Agathon declaring that Eros is "in the first place supreme in beauty and goodness himself, and in the second the cause of like qualities in others."[17] Socrates responds that he himself has used much the same argument but Diotima, a wise woman from Mantinea, taught him otherwise.[18] He now wishes to give the account of love he once heard from her. In the dialogue that follows, Socrates, for the most part, asks the questions and Diotima responds.

A number of important points are made in regard to the nature and objects of love. We learn that rather than being "supreme in beauty and goodness" as Agathon has asserted, Eros is always poor and desires what he does not have. Diotima describes his nature as follows,

> Far from being sensitive and beautiful, as most people imagine, he is hard and weather-beaten, shoeless and homeless, always sleeping out for want of a bed, on the ground, on doorsteps, and in the street. So far he takes after his mother and lives in want. But, being also his father's son, he schemes to get for himself whatever is beautiful and good; he is bold and forward and strenuous, always devising tricks like a cunning huntsman; he yearns after knowledge and is full of resource and is a lover of wisdom all his life, a skilful magician, an alchemist, a true sophist. He is neither mortal nor immortal; but on one and the same day he will live and flourish (when things go well with him), and also meet his death; and then

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[17]Hamilton, The Symposium, page 71; Jowett, On Homosexuality, *Symposium*, section 197c.

[18]It is generally acknowledged that Diotima is a fictional person. See Hamilton, The Symposium, 19.

> come to life again through the vigor that he inherits from his father. What he wins he always loses, and is neither rich nor poor, neither wise nor ignorant.[19]

Since Eros desires both the beautiful and the good, he himself cannot be either. But nor is he ugly or bad. He is somewhere between the two. All the gods are beautiful and good and since Eros is neither, he cannot be a god. Diotima concludes that Eros is in between man and god, a great spirit, half-god and half-man.

Having established that Eros is love and that love is desire, the dialogue continues when Diotima states that love always has an object, a goal. In contrast to Eros, the object of love is "beautiful and delicate and perfect and worthy to be thought happy."[20] Diotima substitutes good for beautiful and argues that desire is common to all men, for all of them wish to possess the good forever. From this she concludes that love is a generic term that includes every desire for good and happiness. She refutes Aristophanes' myth by arguing that love is not desire of half or whole *unless that half is good*, for people are not attached to what particularly belongs to them. The only object of love is what is good. In fact, "love is desire for the *perpetual* possession of the good."[21] But Diotima goes even further.

In the argument that follows, she contends that all mortals seek to perpetuate themselves and become immortal. The aim of love, then, is immortality as well as the good. The only way men can become immortal is through procreation. Those whose

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[19]Hamilton, The Symposium, page 82; Jowett, On Homosexuality, *Symposium*, sections 203d-e.

[20]Hamilton, The Symposium, page 83; Jowett, On Homosexuality, *Symposium*, section 204c.

[21]Hamilton, The Symposium, page 86; Jowett, On Homosexuality, *Symposium*, section 206. Italics mine.

desire is physical have access to women. Physical children can assure the continuous replacement of old members by new ones. Those whose desire is of the soul are attracted to the physical beauty of another male who also, if the lover is fortunate enough, has beauty of soul. The object of their association is education and to bring forth spiritual children in beauty. These children are superior to physical children because they are immortal and beautiful as well.

So far, Diotima has concluded that Eros is not a god but a great spirit, that love always has an object, and that love is a generic term which includes all desires for the perpetual possession of the good and for immortality.

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of the passage which describes the nature of Eros is not what Diotima says, but what she left out. Her description of the god does not include interpersonal love. Eros yearns for knowledge, his love is not for another person, but for wisdom. This passage sets the tone for the entire dialogue. These are some of the main points:

*The preliminary arguments are intended to expand the notion of love presented by the previous speakers. They all based their arguments on history, myth and daily life, in other words, on what was commonly known. Diotima, on the other hand, argues that love always has an object or goal which is the same for everyone, namely, the perpetual possession of the beautiful and the good. But from a human perspective, this argument is problematic. J. G. Fichte, for example, objects to the idea and argues that, "consciousness of objects cannot be understood without reference to an act of free self-determination on

the part of the knowing subject."[22] Rollo May also sees human beings,

> As given motivation by the new possibilities, . . . goals and ideals, which attract and pull them towards the future . . . . The aspect of purpose, which comes into the process when the individual can become conscious of what he is doing, opens him up to new and different possibilities in the future, and introduces the element of personal responsibility and freedom.[23]

Both Fichte and May are human centered, and both emphasize the priority of human initiative and action as well as individual freedom of choice in the determination of purposes and goals.

*While Fichte and May both argue against the idea of a fixed goal which is the same for everyone, Carl Rogers questions the goal oriented approach to life. He argues that the good life is a process, not a state of being. It is a direction, not a goal. Rogers, too, emphasizes human freedom and choice when he maintains that, "The direction which constitutes the good life is that which is selected by the total organism, when there is psychological freedom to move in *any* direction."[24] Thus freedom of choice includes the freedom to choose poorly or wisely, with the onus on each individual to choose responsibly, in love as well as in life. Whereas humanists favour a process oriented approach to life, for Plato the goal is always primary.

*A different interpretation of the dialogue suggests that Diotima addresses Plato's

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[22]Quoted by Daniel Breazeale, "Why Fichte Now?" The Journal of Philosophy 88, no. 2 (Oct. 91), 527.

[23]Rollo May, Love and Will (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1969), 93-94.

[24]Carl Rogers, On Becoming a Person. A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961), 186-87.

concern with the education of desire.[25] In this case it may be argued that love, *in the service of education,* always has a goal. Plato, then, argues that the goal of education is to guide human beings to love better, to desire only that which is truly desirable and which alone will bring them true happiness. For Plato this is the eternal and perfect form of the good.[26]

*Diotima's kind of love has nothing in common with the soulful longing for wholeness expressed by Aristophanes. While he argues that our loves are intimately personal, Diotima holds that we are not attached to what belongs to us. She disregards the allure of a particular person in favour of a concept of universal goodness which this person might also possess. The only object of love is what is good and, as Singer points out, the Platonic lover does not love persons. He only loves the goodness in them, not their uniqueness.[27]

*We may be surprised by Diotima's suggestion that love is a generic term. We commonly refer to love on the basis of interpersonal relationships. And yet, in the light of the nature of Eros, Diotima's conclusion is logical and also true to life. For we do in fact experience love of many different things, e.g., love of nature, love of books, of pets or of life itself. By this argument, Diotima acknowledges and gives legitimacy to a multitude of

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[25]F. M. Cornford, "The Doctrine of Eros in Plato's Symposium," in The Unwritten Philosophy and Other Essays, ed. and intro. W. K. C. Guthrie (Cambridge: At The University Press, 1967), 68.

[26]Grube, Plato's Republic, 505e.

[27]Irving Singer, Nature of Love, vol. 1, Plato to Luther (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966, repr. 1984; paperback edition, 1987), 69.

love objects in addition to interpersonal love and thereby she moves far beyond anything the previous speakers have proposed. But she emphasizes that the aim of desire must be for good and happiness.

*Diotima continues to break new ground in the thinking about love when she argues that the aim of love is immortality. Although we may understand a love of beauty and goodness and may agree that love is a generic term, it is difficult to relate to the abstraction "love of immortality." The concept is so far removed from the ideas we usually associate with love that it fails to touch us. How many women's desire to have children arises from such a concept?

In preparation for the ascent passage and the revelation of the final goal of Eros, Diotima has greatly expanded the notion of love. In the process she has largely ignored interpersonal love and consolidated her own particular view of love in terms of abstract universals.

Stepping aside from the main arguments for a moment, we note that Diotima speaks of physical and spiritual procreation. This brings up the twentieth century understanding of Platonic love by which we usually mean a romantic relationship between a man and a woman that precludes sexual intimacy. But this is a misnomer. It does not truly reflect Plato's ideas. In a true Platonic relationship love and education are strongly linked and the same can be said of love and creativity. The lover seeks beauty, and with

the beauty of his beloved in full view, the lover is inspired to create beauty.[28] Did a Platonic relationship include physical intimacy? Plato is not quite clear on this point. But in the *Laws* he explicitly forbids homosexual intercourse. The reason he gives is that sexual intimacy between males is unnatural.[29] Plato also frowns on heterosexual intimacy except for short periods and then only for the purpose of procreation.[30] Women are not included amongst the spiritual lovers. Plato apparently believes that their creativity is limited to physical procreation.

The Ascent Passage

Diotima now turns to the revelation of the perfect form of beauty, the final goal of Eros. The approach is gradual and begins in youth. It proceeds through five consecutive, progressive steps aptly referred to as the ladder or ascent of love.[31] The lover must dedicate himself to the contemplation of beauty and must be properly directed with Eros as his guide. Beginning with the love of one particular beautiful person the lover observes that physical beauty in one person is much like the physical beauty in another and he becomes lover of physical beauty in general. Then he realizes that beauty of soul is more

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[28]Hamilton, Symposium, page 91; Jowett, On Homosexuality, *Symposium*, section 209b-d.

[29]Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds., The Collected Dialogues of Plato, VIII, Plato: Laws (Princeton University Press: Bollingen Series LXXI, 1961), 1401, 836 b-c. See also Grube, Plato's Republic, 403b.

[30]Grube, Plato's Republic, 460.

[31]Singer, Nature, 1, 56.

valuable than beauty of body even if the body is not beautiful. This insight guides him to contemplate the beauty of activities and institutions, moral beauty. He recognizes that here too all beauty is alike. He must then be guided to contemplate beauty of sciences and beauty of knowledge in general until he reaches the supreme knowledge, the only object of which is absolute beauty. At this point,

> He may no longer be the slave of a mean-spirited devotion to an individual example of beauty, whether the object of his love be a boy or a man or an activity, but, by gazing upon the vast ocean of beauty to which his attention is now turned, [he] may bring forth in the abundance of his love of wisdom many beautiful and magnificent ideas until at last, strengthened and increased in stature by this experience, he catches sight of one unique science whose object is the beauty of which I am about to speak.[32]

As he approaches the end of his initiation, the person who has followed the right path will suddenly have revealed to him the final goal, the form of perfect goodness and beauty. Only the lover of wisdom, the philosopher, has the capacity to proceed this far.

> This beauty is first of all eternal; it neither comes into being nor passes away, neither waxes nor wanes; next, it is not beautiful in part and ugly in part, nor beautiful at one time and ugly at another, nor beautiful in this relation and ugly in that, nor beautiful here and ugly there, as varying according to its beholders; nor again will this beauty appear to him like the beauty of a face or hands or anything else corporeal, or like the beauty of a thought or a science, or like beauty which has its seat in something other than itself, be it a living thing or the earth or the sky or anything whatsoever; he will see it as absolute, existing alone with itself, unique, eternal, and all other beautiful things as partaking of it, yet in such a manner that while they come into being and pass away, it neither undergoes any increase or diminution nor suffers any change.[33]

The revelation is not the outcome of a thought process. It is an intuitive experience, a

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[32]Hamilton, Symposium, pages 92-93; Jowett, On Homosexuality, *Symposium*, sections 210c-e.

[33]Hamilton, Symposium, pages 93-94; Jowett, On Homosexuality, *Symposium*, section 211-b.

mystical, spiritual union with perfect beauty and goodness, the highest object and ultimate goal of desire. This is where a man's life should be spent, in contemplation of absolute beauty:

> For in that region alone where he sees with the faculty capable of seeing it, will he be able to bring forth not mere reflected images of goodness but true goodness, because he will be in contact not with a reflection but with the truth. And having brought forth and nurtured true goodness he will have the privilege of being loved by God, and becoming, if ever a man can, immortal himself.[34]

In the process the lover himself becomes perfect and perhaps even immortal.

The dialogue ends when Diotima declares that "in the acquisition of this blessing human nature can find no better helper than Love... It is [therefore] the duty of every man to honour Love."[35]

There is no unanimity in the interpretation of the ascent. One line of thinking suggests that the ascent be viewed in terms of stages in life. Human life is a process. We live and love not merely in terms of what we are or what we were but most importantly in terms of what we may become. The lover of wisdom does not abandon the loves of the present for higher loves of the future. His life is enriched by the inclusion of many different and new kinds of love as his life unfolds. Eros is the driving force.[36] But for Plato, as argued above, the goal always comes first, and this renders the "process interpretation"

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[34]Hamilton, Symposium, page 95; Jowett, On Homosexuality, *Symposium*, section 212c.

[35]Hamilton, Symposium, page 95; Jowett, On Homosexuality, *Symposium*, section 212b.

[36]Moravcsik, "Reason and Eros," 285.

unlikely.

In a second interpretation, Plato's lover of wisdom in his pursuit of perfection loves and leaves persons and the human life world. The lover's mind is focused on the final goal and all he desires is to unite with the eternal and perfect form of the good. The ascent is effortless. Plato admits to no distress and no pain in the process. This interpretation is true to Plato's ideas in other areas, especially his concepts of eternal forms and of the soul, which I will briefly summarize below.

Everything on earth, including nature and abstract concepts such as justice, wisdom and courage, are copies of eternal forms located in a realm beyond the human world which is visible only to the mind.[37] The forms are perfect and alone have true reality. They are arranged in a descending order with the form of the good at the top. In fact, the form of the good overarches and is the cause of everything,

> [The form of the good] must be reckoned to be for all the cause of all that is right and beautiful, to have produced in the visible world both light and the fount of light, while in the intelligible world it is itself that which produces and controls truth and intelligence, and he who is to act intelligently in public or in private must see it.[38]

The forms are the only true objects of knowledge because they are unchanging as opposed to the changing phenomena of the human world which invite only opinion. To Plato, this imaginary realm of forms is the real world.

His ideas of the soul are based on a dualistic view of human beings. Plato holds

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[37]Grube, Plato's Republic, esp. "Book V."

[38]Ibid., 517c.

that the human soul is lodged in an inferior, mortal body. The soul is divided in three, the rational, the spirited (emotional), and the appetitive part which is the largest. Each part of the soul has its separate function which it carries out without taking on the functions of the others. Each has its own kind of pleasure which is noble and honourable provided it reaches the goal for which it strives. But the rational soul must rule because it is the wisest and because it has foresight. Plato explains,

> If the whole soul follows the wisdom-loving part and there is no dissention, then each part will be able to fulfill its own task and be just in other respects, and also each will reap its own pleasures, the best and truest as far as possible.[39]

The soul is immortal because that is immortal which is always in motion, self-moving, unbegotten and indestructible.[40] While the perfect soul, fully winged, soars upward and is the ruler of the universe, the imperfect soul loses its feathers and drops in flight. It settles on the solid ground where it finds a home and receives an earthly frame. This union of soul and body is called a being, a mortal creature.[41] Only the mind of the philosopher has wings for he, as well as he is able, remembers those things in which God abides. It is not easy to recall the things of the other world and only few retain the memory of them sufficiently. But he who rightly applies what he remembers is forever being admitted into the perfect mysteries and alone becomes truly perfect.[42]

The eternal realm of forms is the true home of the soul: "Every soul of man has in

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[39]Ibid., 586e.

[40]Jowett, On Homosexuality, *Phaedrus*, 245c-d.

[41]Ibid., 246b-c.

[42]Ibid., 249c.

the way of nature beheld true being; this was the condition of her passing into the form of man."[43]

With Plato's concepts of eternal forms and immortal soul, we can begin to understand why Plato insists that true love cannot be contained within the imperfect human life world and, most certainly not, as Aristophanes argues, in interpersonal love, but only in the embrace of otherworldly perfection.

Plato's lover is a divided being with an immortal soul, the *rational* part of the soul, guided by a love of wisdom. The appetitive and the emotional parts of the soul are of little concern to Plato. Thus, at the highest level, sexual love does not exist. Plato has dismissed the body, together with feelings and emotions. Only the mind can reach the pinnacle of love. The offspring from the union with the perfect form of the good are purely intellectual. In Singer's interpretation,

> The true Platonic lover detaches his love from the limitations of one or another body, person, community, or activity. He goes *through* everything in the empirical world, but gives his heart to nothing. Though he detaches his love, however, the philosopher need not detach *himself*. He may live with or for other people, even ruling them as the voice of reason. He may enjoy the company of his fellows, delighting in their beauty and goodness. As one who reveres the absolute, he will automatically act for that which is best in man. But since the empirical world is radically imperfect, he knows that nothing on earth can satisfy his longing for the ideal. Only perfection can make the lover perfect in himself.[44]

I find Singers' description of the Platonic lover too sympathetic. It is very troubling that the lover apparently has no feelings, no emotions, no attachments to the human life world.

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[43]Ibid., 250.

[44]Singer, Nature, 1, 70.

If the Platonic lover were female, she would be incapable of nurturing her children.

This rational lover is too cold for comfort. Is he happy, as Plato maintains? If we follow Plato's line of thinking, the answer is yes, because the lover's rational soul has returned to its true home in the "real world" beyond this world where it belongs and, "[when] fed upon mind and pure knowledge, such intelligent souls are glad at once more beholding being; and feeding on the sight of truth is replenished."[45] But as whole and undivided beings we cannot accept Plato's dualism. If we are to live a full life, we cannot favour the rational soul and forget about feelings and emotions. Being human means that all of our parts are necessary and interdependent, that all is one.

The goal of Plato's concept of love is perfection. But human beings only have so much physical stamina, intelligence has limits as well and we are confined in time and space. Our human limitations therefore mean that overall perfection as a goal of desire can never be reached. Even if it could, perfection is an unattractive ideal. When we invest all our energies in its pursuit, we necessarily neglect other aspects of being human that are just as important, and life becomes unbalanced. But when Plato insists that the ultimate goal of desire is perfection which is both beyond human capacity and beyond this world, he acknowledges and provides for the nature of human Eros, i.e., that which urges us to continue to reach even further, forever. A reachable goal would frustrate the nature of the god. This was precisely the limitation of Aristophanes' account.

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[45]Jowett, On Homosexuality, *Phaedrus*, 247d.

The Platonic Lover

The Platonic lover has been portrayed by Thomas Mann in his book *Death in Venice*.[46] His main character, Aschenbach, is a writer, a lover of wisdom, who continuously reaches towards perfection both in his life and in his work. However, in contrast to Plato's ideal lover, his ascent is one of continuous struggle, of severe self-discipline, and self-denial. As he grows progressively more perfect, he loses his creativity, "His later style gave up the old sheer audacities, the fresh and subtle nuances; it became fixed and exemplary, conservative even formulated."[47] He becomes increasingly unable to feel anything and eventually finds himself emotionally numb and lifeless. When at an advanced age he encounters a young boy of godlike appearance, Aschenbach immediately falls passionately in love. But instead of viewing the boy as a first step towards the eternal, perfect form of beauty as a true Platonic lover would, he becomes more and more infatuated with the boy. Not because he is perfect, as Aschenbach thought at first, but precisely because of the small imperfections he gradually discovers in him. The more Aschenbach becomes aware of the boy's essential humanity the more he loves him. His long repressed emotions rush to the fore, "He felt a rapture of his blood, the poignant pleasure, and realized that it was for Tadzio's sake."[48] In the presence of his beloved his creativity soared. In the end Aschenbach is totally possessed by Tadzio and follows him

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[46]Thomas Mann, Death in Venice (New York: Vintage Books, 1954).

[47]Ibid., 14.

[48]Ibid., 40.

around "in utter drunkenness."[49] He cannot leave and death is the only release.

In this characterization of Aschenbach, Mann clearly demonstrates that solitary striving and devotion to perfection dry up the emotional life and stymie all creative effort. It is the shared humanity and the unique nature of mortals that fuel both desire and creativity and not a hypothetical essence of perfection, as Plato would have us believe. Thus *Death in Venice* is a resounding rejection of Diotima's concept of rational love.[50] And yet, the ideal of perfection has haunted humanity throughout the history of the Western world to the detriment of other ideals, more supportive of the complex needs of human beings.

Imperfection, not perfection, is the human lot. Rather than despairing at this fundamental fact we should see it as opportunity. Perhaps it is our saving grace. For imperfection invites movement, growth, creativity. This was well understood by Theodore Roethke in *The Root Cellar* below.

> Nothing would sleep in that cellar, dank as a ditch,
> Bulbs broke out of boxes hunting for chinks in the dark,
> Shoots dangled and drooped,
> Lolling obscenely from mildewed crates,
> Hung down long yellow evil necks, like tropical snakes.
> And what a congress of stinks!--
> Roots ripe as old bait,
> Pulpy stems, rank, silo-rich,
> Leaf-mold, manure, lime, piled against slippery planks.
> Nothing would give up life:

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[49]Ibid., 59.

[50]Dina Andersen, The Influence of Plato's Concept of Eros Love on "Death in Venice" (Toronto: Unpublished Paper, 1984).

Even the dirt kept breathing a small breath.[51]

Imperfection, as Roethke points out, is fertile. This is true not only in terms of bulbs and soil but in human beings. And it is precisely the imperfection, the incompleteness of human beings that fuels desire, as Aristophanes pointed out so well.

Commentary

Plato manipulated the idea of Eros he inherited from mythology to advance his own esoteric philosophy. It is no accident that to love better the philosopher must *climb*, for in Plato's way of thinking, the love above is more valuable than the one below and interpersonal love is lower than any other kind of love. But in what sense is love of institutions or sciences or pure knowledge better than a love of persons? Although they all may represent objects of desire on the part of a lover, it seems that comparing interpersonal love with the love of institutions is to liken apples to oranges. Both are potentially good and desirable. But they are different and therefore defy comparison. Plato's hierarchical pattern of thinking does not permit objects, different but equal, side by side, and therefore does not allow for the breadth of experience, and his theories do not allow for the breadth of love. This is evident also when Plato defines love as desire. Love is much more than desirous love. Parents who hold their longed for, newborn child for the first time would find it difficult to identify the love they feel with a simple concept of desire. Love is too large to be contained within a narrow definition such as this.

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[51]Theodore Roethke, The Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1937, repr. 1975), 36. The poem is quoted with permission from Bantam Doubleday Dell, publishers, January 14, 1998.

Both Aristophanes and Plato, in the voice of Diotima, argue for a point, a goal, when desire is fulfilled and all longing and yearning cease. The goal, in the case of Aristophanes, is a return to "the ancient state" when the two halves of the original whole are united again. In Plato's terms, the soul comes back to the eternal realm of perfection where it belongs. Both return to their ground of being. For Aristophanes' beings the result is wholeness, for Plato's soul, wholeness as well, but it can only be achieved by the philosopher who has reached a state of perfection. Both point to an ideal state, for neither eternal wholeness nor total perfection are possible in human life although both remain desirable. Plato's perfection in an imaginary realm belittles human experience within the world. It invites escapism and frustrates a commitment to the human world. So, while I agree that a feeling of wholeness, even if fleeting and temporary, requires an understanding of our place in the world, such a feeling must be grounded in concrete experience, within the human world.

Finally, love in human life is not serene, i.e., not perfect. Love is bitter-sweet. Life and death, love and loss are intertwined. But the fragility of life and love is part of their beauty. The image of the clown with a smile on his mouth and a tear in his eye expresses well the human predicament. To live and to love in the human world requires, in the words of Paul Tillich, "'The courage to be *in spite of*' death, fate, meaninglessness, or despair, each of which in various proportions has threatened mankind throughout the centuries."[52]

To feel that life is good we need the inspiration from the world around us which

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[52]Wilhelm Pauck and Marion Pauck, Paul Tillich. His Life & Thought, vol. 1, Life (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 224-225.

only involvement and commitment to the human world can offer. So, William Barrett is right when he says that, "In the end philosophy has to bow to life and take notice."[53]

In the span of about four hundred years the concepts of love in ancient Greece changed dramatically coinciding with equally dramatic changes in society, especially under the influence of the new way of thinking about the world, called philosophy. Plato defined love as desire. He rejected concrete experiences of love within the human world and gave priority to a theory of love which promoted the immortal soul's perfection in an imaginary, perfect, and eternal realm of beauty and goodness beyond this world. On the one hand he thereby acknowledged the true nature of Eros, i.e., always in need of expansion. On the other hand, however, Plato's metaphysical ideas have led generations astray and have had ominous consequences for human life, especially as they were incorporated into the Christian world view. I will have more to say about this in a later chapter.

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[53]William Barrett, Time of Need. Forms of Imagination in the Twentieth Century (New York: Harper and Row, Harper Colophon Books, 1972; Harper Torchbook, 1973), 8.

CHAPTER 3

NOMOS

Although Greece and Judea are but a stone's throw away from each other, the ideas each of them developed differed greatly on the basis of their separate views of the world and of human being. In Greece, Plato initiated philosophy, emphasized rational thought and knowledge, and invented a realm of perfection beyond this world which, he argued, is the real world, the object of man's highest aspirations and ultimate love. The ideal man is intellectual and theoretical, a divided being with a divine, eternal soul trapped in a mortal body. Love, when it is most sublime, is of the intellect. It is rational and non-sexual, detached from feelings and emotions, and from the human world.

The Jews, on the other hand, believed in a single, omnipotent, transcendent being, a male, supreme god. His actions in history had clearly demonstrated to them that their god was not only powerful and loving and kind, but that he was also intensely concerned with human beings. In his very first act of love, he created the world and "behold it was very good."[1] The pious Jew is a man of faith. He is "whole" and undivided, body and soul are one. Intellectual detachment from the world which was so prominent in Plato's concept of love is impossible in Judaism. The Jew is steeped in lived experience. He sees

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[1]Gen. 1:31.

the whole world as belonging to God and reflecting his glory[2] and believes that God's wonderful creation is to be enjoyed. The Jew, therefore, typically loves the human world. He refuses to abandon the physical aspects of life, and sex and family life are very important to him, for God commanded him "to be fruitful and multiply."[3] The ancient Jews had knowledge too, but it was different from that of the Greeks,

> It is not the kind of knowledge that man can have through reason alone, or perhaps not through reason at all; he has it rather through body and blood, bones and bowels, through trust and anger and confusion and love and fear; through his passionate adhesion in faith to the Being whom he can never intellectually know. This kind of knowledge a man has only through living, not reasoning, and perhaps in the end he cannot even say what it is he knows; yet it is knowledge all the same, and Hebraism at its source had this knowledge.[4]

In the concept of nomos, religion, history, faith and love are closely bound together in a single world-view and way of life. Nomos literally means law, or, by extension, adherence to the law. Nomos is the Jewish response to God's love for them. In this chapter I will trace the origin and early development of nomos and discuss the implications of this concept for the Jewish people.

Nomos originates in the myths recorded in the Old Testament. They relate how God revealed himself in historical (or what are believed to be historical) events and disclosed his love and purpose for the Jewish people. Two acts in particular convinced the

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[2]Huston Smith, The Religions of Man (New York: Harper & Row, 1958; First Perennial Library Edition, 1965), 284.

[3]Gen.1:22.

[4]William Barrett, Irrational Man (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1958; Anchor Books, 1962), 79.

Jews of the spontaneous character of his love. In the first, he liberated the small, enslaved Hebrew tribe from Egypt[5] and chose them for his people for no apparent reason other than that he loved them.[6] The Jews understood that they were not chosen as a special privilege but in order to serve God and to endure the sufferings such service requires.[7] In his second act of love, immediately following the liberation, God entered into a covenant agreement with the Jewish people in which he pledged his steadfast love and protection for them. They in return must promise to give themselves to God.[8] This covenant is more than a contract of love for not only does it involve the pledging of total selves, but it carries through to death.

Whether the myths express factual history or fictional accounts of events is not important, for, as Northrop Frye explains, "The general principle involved here is that if anything historically true is in the Bible, it is not there because it is historically true but for different reasons. The reasons have presumably something to do with spiritual profundity or significance."[9] This is certainly the case for the pious Jew who would agree that the myths in the Old Testament are laden with "spiritual profundity or significance," to use the

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[5]Believed to have taken place approximately 1280 B.C. according to Eric Voegelin, Order and History, vol. 1, Israel and Revelation (Louisiana State University Press, 1956, repr. 1976), 117.

[6]Deut. 7:6-8. All references to the Bible are taken from the revised standard edition of A Reader's Guide to the Holy Bible (New York: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1972).

[7]Smith, Religions, 290.

[8]Ex.19:5, "Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples." See also Deut. 7:6.

[9]Frye, Code, 40.

words of Frye.

Being so good, God would naturally want the Jews to be good as well. They always understood that they had the freedom to create their own destiny through the choices they made and that they were free to become more but also less than they could be. They were not forced but invited to be good, "Cease to do evil, learn to do good."[10]

God demanded high standards of moral conduct. But since humans are weak and easily let astray, God revealed himself to Moses, and gave him the ten commandments[11] to help the Jews adhere to the terms of the covenant. Coming from God they were holy. They had absolute priority and could not be questioned by reason. They were literally, so we are told, etched in stone.[12] After Moses, love of God required total obedience to the law.[13] But this demand should not be understood in terms of sheer legalism, "It is devotion to God *by means of* laws,"[14]

> Nomos is not obedience in itself so much as the *acquiescence* in obedience. It is man adhering so thoroughly to the will of God that breaking the enunciated commandments becomes a moral impossibility. Acting justly was not enough. . . . The essential thing was to be just through a conformity of will, a loss of inclination to rebel, a bestowed acceptance of God's authority--complete, spontaneous, irrational trust.[15]

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[10]Isa. 1:16-17.

[11]See Ex. 20:1-17. Also Deut. 5:6-21.

[12]Ex. 31:18.

[13]Hosea 6:6, "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings."

[14]Singer, Nature, I, 251.

[15]Ibid., 252.

To love God is a moral obligation expressed in practice and doing, through righteous living by adherence to the law and submission to the will of God.

The first commandment is of special interests here. It exhorts the Jews to love God with all their mind, all their soul, and all their strength.[16] In the beginning this meant taking pride in their heritage and showing gratitude to God by means of burnt offerings. The early Jews believed that if they were faithful, they would be blessed with prosperity and a long life. Having little or no understanding of a life beyond, they trusted that God in time would establish the promised land on earth: "A good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees, and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey."[17] But their god was not just loving and kind. He was also unpredictable and could be given to fits of anger and jealousy. If the Jews strayed from their commitment to God, they were cursed:

> Cursed shall you be in the City, and cursed shall you be in the field. Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading-trough. Cursed shall be the fruit of your body, and the fruit of your ground, the increase of your cattle, and the young of your flock. Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out.[18]

To love God was therefore not always easy and did not necessarily involve warm feelings. It was closer to respect, often respect out of fear.

While the evidence of God's love for them was obvious for anyone to see, the Jews continuously came up short in their relationship with God. History reminded them of

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[16]Deut. 6:4-9.

[17]Deut. 8:7-8.

[18]Deut. 28:15-19. The further calamities that will befall the faithless are spelled out in detail throughout the remainder of Deut. 28.

their many transgressions in the past and served to reinforce their sense of sinfulness: Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit; Cain murdered his brother, Abel; the sons of Noah were guilty of incest and homosexuality.[19] In short, the Jews saw themselves as sinners, the root meaning of which is "to miss the mark."[20] The Jews almost always did. With a keen sense of their own imperfections they blamed themselves for not meeting God's requirements:

> The Hebraic sense of sin . . . is too much aware of the galling and refractory aspects of human existence to make this easy identification of the good and the beautiful [as did the Greeks]. The sense of the sinfulness of biblical man is the sense of radical finitude in its aspects of imperfection.[21]

Unable to measure up to the greatness of their God, the Jews developed a philosophy of life based on a strongly realistic view of their human limitations, and self-blame and self-deprecation became part of their psychology.

Two stories in the Old Testament illuminate the nature of nomos. In the first, Abraham's love for God was tested when God demanded that he sacrifice his son, Isaac. Being a righteous man, Abraham listened to the will of God and prepared his son for the slaughter. Only in the moment he lifted the knife did God intervene and spare Isaac.[22] The lesson of the story is that submission to the will of God always has priority over one's

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[19]Smith, Religions, 270.

[20]Ibid., 264.

[21]Barrett, Irrational, 78.

[22]Gen. 22:9-14.

moral duty to fellow human beings. Abraham demonstrated that he loved God above all else, even his son's life. His act was therefore justified. But from a human perspective, the contemplated slaughter of one's own son would be condemned as the workings of a deranged person, a sick mind. Can blind trust in a deity, whose existence is at the very least doubtful, really justify murder?

The second example is the story about Job. The prophets generally assumed that God would punish the willful person while the righteous would be rewarded. If Israel suffered it was because the nation no longer listened to God's will. The same would hold true for individuals. But this belief was questioned when the Jews saw the pious afflicted with misfortune while the wicked prospered. This problem was addressed in the book of Job.

He was a blameless and upright man who feared god and turned away from evil. He was also wealthy and good, one of the best. According to God, "There is no one like him."[23] In a wager with Satan, God tested Job's faith. He was made to lose everything he owned, everyone he loved, and, finally, his health. Throughout his ordeals he suffered terribly.

Job responded to his sufferings with a range of emotions, which became intensely more painful as his afflictions persisted and even multiplied. In the beginning Job expresses patient understanding, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil" (2:10), and he reflects on the harshness of the human lot:

Has not man a hard service upon earth, and are not his days like the days of a

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[23]Job 1:8. Short biblical references to the Book of Job will be noted in the text.

> hireling? Like a slave who longs for the shadow, and like a hireling, who looks for his wages, so I am allotted months of emptiness, and nights of misery are apportioned to me (7:1-4).

Anger follows, "He crushes me with a tempest, and multiplies my wounds without cause" (9:17), and painful confusion is next, "How many are my iniquities and my sins?" (13:23). He begs God to let him know his transgressions:

> What is man that thou dost make so much of him, and that thou dost set thy mind upon him, dost visit him every morning, and test him every moment? How long will thou not look away from me, nor let me alone till I swallow my spittle? If I sin, what do I do to thee, thou watcher of men? Why hast thou made me thy mark? Why have I become a burden to thee? Why dost thou not pardon my transgression and take away my iniquity? (7:17-21).

Finally, as his pain continues, Job is overcome by hopelessness and despair, "My spirit is broken" (17:1), "My eye has grown dim from grief" (17:7), and "Where then is my hope?" (17:15).

Friends who come to comfort him believe that Job must somehow have disturbed the divine order of things, and that eventually it must right itself, "Despise not the chastening of the almighty. For he wounds, but he binds up; he smites but his hands heal" (5:17-18). In their search for answers the friends are of no help to Job. He has heard all their arguments before. At one point he states, "No doubt you are the people, and wisdom will die with you. But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you. Who does not know such things as these?" (12:1-3). There are no human answers to Job's misery.

In chapters twenty-nine to thirty-one we learn that throughout his life, Job never departed from the commandments; he always acted out of love; he was good and kind in

all his ways and responsive to the needs of those who were less fortunate. Even though he now suffers greatly for no reason that he can discern, Job never strays from his faith. In confrontation with God, he retains his own identity, "Behold, he will slay me; I have no hope; yet I will defend my ways to his face" (13:15). This attitude is justified, according to Frye, "For the man who acts out of love the inherent goodness of his life will always seem sufficient."[24] God had previously made a rough distinction between Job's possessions and his "life" (2:6), but in chapters twenty-nine to thirty-one, "we begin to see what 'life' means for humanity: a consciousness that is neither proud nor abased, but simply responsible, and accepts what responsibility is there."[25]

Suddenly out of the whirlwind comes the voice of God. As Job listens, he perceives the majesty and glory of God and finally understands that in God's great scheme of things, he is nothing special, "I know that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be thwarted. . . . I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (42:3).[26] Upon hearing Job's words, God restored his health and fortune. He gave him sons and daughters and twice as much wealth as he had before. Thus, Job's final acquiescence and God's response imply that his friends were right all along even though they were explicitly said not to be (42:7).

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[24]Frye, Code, 195.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Repent, i.e., undergoes a "metamorphosis of consciousness," according to Frye, Code, 193.

Job, so we are told, was a responsible and a good man who loved God and obeyed his commands in every respect. He could justifiably expect to be rewarded. Instead he was severely punished for no reason that he could discern. Throughout his ordeal Job never wavered from his faith, and thus he won the wager for God. But how can we believe the loving-kindness of a god that subjects one of his most faithful servants to the torture Job had to endure? And where was this God during the ordeal? We, too, may ask along with Frye, "How much can a man lose of what he has before the loss begins to affect what he is?"[27] Job prostrates himself before God, both physically and mentally. He even hates himself and gives up on his personal will. The answer to his misery, then, lies in a conversion of the whole person, as he resigns himself to the mystery of God's ways. This new attitude is his salvation. But Job's story does not resolve the problem of human suffering. Even with renewed health, new family and fortune, life cannot proceed as before. The scars of the pain and sufferings remain forever.

Job's story continues to touch those who can relate to his pain when life just does not seem worth living. We too may feel that "we deserve better," and we too may ask, "why?", "Why me?" and experience the torturous emotions so clearly expressed by Job. Even we, who have no religious faith, can see God in this story in terms of a metaphor for life itself. Perhaps, we also, in confrontation with life, can learn to temper our will, our anger, our frustrations with acquiescence. Perhaps, then, we too can face the bitter times as well as the good and learn to live with the ebb and flow of life, so well expressed by Ecclesiastes, and, perhaps the new attitude is the ground from which will emerge the early

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[27]Ibid., 195.

stirrings of a new or renewed love of life.

> For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under the heaven:
> A time to be born, and a time to die;
> A time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
> A time to kill, and a time to heal;
> A time to break down, and a time to build up;
> A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
> A time to mourn, and a time to dance;
> A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
> A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
> A time to seek, and a time to lose;
> A time to keep, and a time to cast away;
> A time to rend, and a time to sew;
> A time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
> A time to love, and a time to hate;
> A time for war, and a time for peace.[28]

In summary, the Jewish concept of nomos originates in the myths recorded in the Old Testament. It is based on a covenant agreement between God and the Jewish people and refers to man's response to God's loving-kindness. Early in history, nomos meant loving God by taking pride in one's origin and glorifying God by means of burnt offerings. On the basis of myths and metaphors, the concept was further developed over time and loving God by obedience to the law and submission of the human will became the essence of the concept. For those who doubt that nomos is a part of religious love, Singer's comments are instructive,

> Feelings of the most diverse sort cluster about it: the fear of God, which helps man make the painful sacrifice of his rebellious will; pride in God's achievements . . . ; adoration--even adulation--of God himself . . . . Obedience, acquiescence, trust, submission of the will provide the root meaning of nomos, but within a fluid context of feelings that enable man to acknowledge and reciprocate God's loving-

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[28]Eccl. 3:1-8.

kindness.[29]

The myths of the Old Testament have forged a vital bond between all Jews throughout the world and have strengthened and carried them through displacements, persecutions, and unbelievable sufferings throughout history and up to the present day. Against all odds, the continued vitality of these myths in the lives of pious Jews, has prevented the extinction of the Jewish race. Rather than a chronicle of events that took place in antiquity, history, including nomos, remains an active force for good or evil. A force to be reckoned with.

Belief in their own limitations and God's overwhelming love convinced the religious Jews that if they suffered it was because they had transgressed the will of God. Thus, their belief in God's loving-kindness was the guiding light that informed their moral will. It gave them strength from antiquity to modern day and enabled them to find meaning in suffering, "For the Lord your God is a merciful God; he will not fail you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers which he swore to them."[30]

The problem with nomos, and Jewish history in general, arises when believers are motivated to adopt the moral commitments expressed in ancient myths and metaphors. The story of Abraham is a case in point. There is grave danger when Abraham and later Jews dismiss human judgment in favour of obedience to an authoritative god they cannot really know.

This has become especially clear in the state of Israel where the decision to

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[29]Singer, Nature, I, 253.

[30]Deut. 4:31.

establish the state of Israel on ancient Jewish lands has created untold problems for the Jews.[31] Although most Jews took immense pride and satisfaction in this accomplishment, "Nobody understood how rebuilding Israel on its original foundations would unleash such powerful historical passions among Jews themselves."[32] Thus, Noam Friedman, a young religious fanatic, "a dangerous lunatic," opened fire on Palestinian civilians because, as he said, "Abraham bought the Cave of the Patriarchs for four hundred shekels of silver," and, "No one will return it." As Gwynne Dyer points out, "Israel's greatest threat is not the Palestinians . . . . It is not the neighbouring Arab countries . . . . It is the huge burden of Jewish history." Baruch Goldstein who killed many Arab civilians near Hebron a few years ago and Yigal Amir, who assassinated Yitzhak Rabbin, were "intoxicated" by history and believed themselves instruments of history. God demanded that Abraham sacrifice his son but in the end he spared the life of Isaac. Four thousand years later, Yigal Amir made a similar claim when he maintained that God told him to kill Yitzhak Rabbin. God had mercy but Amir did not. When ancient history has the power to influence religious fanatics to kill, some may agree with Dyer who concludes that,

> History (including Jewish history) is dead; it cannot demand anything. What really matters is the present and the future of the people who are alive today, both Israelis and Palestinians. It will be a grim future if the government of Israel cannot get a firm grip on those of its citizens whom the history has driven mad.[33]

Most Jews are as sickened by the violence of religious fanatics as Dyer. But, unlike Dyer,

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[31]Gwynne Dyer, "History is a heavy burden in Mideast," The Toronto Star, January 6, 1997: A15, passim.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Ibid.

they cannot easily dismiss history. Overwhelmingly nomos has been a force for good.

In chapter one, I discussed Eros love which the ancient Greeks believed was a life force. If ever there was an outstanding example of love as a life force it has to be nomos. Without the concept of nomos we can well wonder about the fate and destiny of the Jewish people: through history, during the holocaust of the Second World War and even today. Nomos has always been and will continue to be a powerful force in the lives of pious Jews.

CHAPTER 5

AGAPĒ

The Greek word agapē literally means brotherly love. For the early Christians it came to indicate a love-feast held in connection with the Lord's Supper.[1] To Christians everywhere, agapē is a glorious word which became synonymous with God's great love for humanity. Agapē, then, is the fundamental theme in Christianity where it gives value and meaning to everything. The Christian god *is* love, perfect love. His overabundant nature overflows and bestows love on human beings forever. God's agapē is wholly unmerited and without limits. It transforms everything it touches and enables human beings to love. Without God there could be no love, for God is the ultimate source of all lesser loves.

Jesus is the key figure in the development of the concept of agapē. In the Christian interpretation, everything about Jesus is significant: his birth, his life, his death. In this chapter, I hope to show the importance of all of the above in the early development and interpretation of agapē.[2] I have divided the chapter into four parts. First, I will deal with Jesus, his life and work. This is followed by the early, further development of agapē. The

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[1]The Concise Oxford Dictionary.

[2]I am indebted to Irving Singer and his interpretation of Christian love. Writing from an outsider's perspective, his clarity and profound insights have been invaluable.

second commandment is next and the final part is a summary of agapē. Commentaries are included where appropriate.

Jesus, his Life and Works

Jesus was born a Jew. For Christians his birth powerfully illustrated God's great love for humanity. It fulfilled the ancient promise that God would send a descendant of David, "a saviour-messiah-Christ" to lead the Jews out of sin into righteousness. The coming of any prophet was a clear indication of God's love. In the birth of Jesus, however, the proof of his love was even more apparent, for Jesus was not only a holy man and a prophet. He was God incarnate, "God become man."[3] God and Jesus were one, and Jesus was both God and man, two natures in one.[4] Douglas N. Morgan, who writes from a Christian perspective, argues that Jesus represents the only important difference between Jewish and Christian love:

> The true Jew . . . holds that the Torah contains all ultimate moral truth, and that the later prophets (including Jesus of Nazareth) were sent to recall man to his loving duties under the law. The Jew does not believe that there ever was a God-in-man, or Lord incarnate. God sustains us continuously in his love.
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> The Christian . . . will hold that, in addition to the Torah and in fulfilment of the prophesies, God miraculously overflowed into history and actively sought to save each sinful man with his divine love through Jesus Christ. God freely gave himself to us, in giving Jesus to us. As Jesus, being God, demands righteousness of us, his imperatives empower us: he enlivens us with his love, even as he commands

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[3]Douglas N. Morgan, Love: Plato, The Bible and Freud (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1964), 71.

[4]Martin E. Marty, A Short History of Christianity (The World Publishing Company, 1959; New American Library, 1974), 93.

of us our love. No earlier prophet made this claim.[5]

In the Judaeo/Christian tradition, two issues are always connected, namely, God's great love for humans and their reciprocal love for God. In the Old Testament, those who loved God by following his commandments, that is, by respecting his laws, were good. However, compared to God's overwhelming love for them, the prophets repeatedly pointed out that the Jews came up short in their love for God. So, the Jews were keenly aware of their own shortcomings and this resulted in feelings of guilt and self-deprecation and a pessimistic philosophy of life. With the coming of Jesus, the emphasis moved away from man's failure to God's love though man's failure was still assumed. This shift in emphasis brought about a new relation of humans to God and, in a sense, a new, positive philosophy of life. In Christianity, loved by God *makes* you good.

Like the prophets of the Old Testament, Jesus knew himself called to carry out God's work on earth. He did not claim to be a founder of a new religion, "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matt. 5:17).[6] In his teachings and in his work, Jesus continuously stressed God's great love for humans. As the prophets before him, Jesus preached that he came "not to call the righteous but the sinners" (Mark 2:17). But unlike his predecessors Jesus told his followers that he had the authority of God to forgive the sins of those who believed in him (Luke 5:24).

That God in his great love would stoop down to human beings in order to save

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[5]Morgan, Love, 76.

[6]All references to the Bible are placed within the main text.

them was an entirely new idea. It offered hope of salvation for even the lowliest and most despised members of society. This had never been possible before. Agapē which *includes* love of sinners therefore exceeds the law and righteousness which *excluded* them. Agapē is the central theme in the parables told by Jesus, amongst them, *The Labourers in the Vineyard* and *The Prodigal Son,* which I will briefly summarize below.

In *The Labourers in the Vineyard* (Matt. 20:1-16), a landowner went to the market in the early morning to hire labourers. He agreed to pay them one denarius for a day's work and sent them to his vineyard. As the day progressed the landowner hired labourers three more times and each time he told them that he would pay them what was right. When evening came, he first paid those who were hired last. He gave them each one denarius. This amount was far more than they could rightfully claim. He gave those who had laboured all day one denarius as well. But when these labourers received their pay, they grumbled because the men who had worked a much shorter day received the same amount. The landowner told them that he had done them no wrong for they had agreed to work for one denarius: "I choose to give to the last as I gave to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or is your eye evil because I am good?"

In *The Prodigal Son* (Luke 15: 11-32), a man with two sons divided his property between them. The younger son squandered his share and when everything was spent he decided to return to his father. He memorized a speech he would give on returning home. It was calculated to impress the father, but expressed no genuine remorse. When the father saw his son coming in the distance, he ran towards him, embraced him and kissed him.

The son in return gave his speech to the father saying that he had sinned and that he was no longer worthy of being called his son. But contrary to expectations, the father directed his servants to bring the best robe and put it on his son, a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. He ordered that the fattest calf be slaughtered and that they eat and be merry.

Meanwhile, the elder son was in the field and on returning home, as he came closer to the house, he heard music and dancing. When he asked what it all meant, he was told that his younger brother had come back and that his father had killed the fattest calf because his son had returned safe and sound. This angered the elder son who refused to join the party. The father went to him and tried to persuade him to come in, but the son said, "Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf." The father replied, "Son, you are always with me. It was fitting to make merry for this your brother was dead, and is alive."

Both parables illustrate the nature of God's love. In *The Labourers in the Vineyard*, the landowner kept his word to the labourers who worked all day and gave them what they had agreed on. When he gave the same pay to those who had worked for only a short while, he just felt generous. He enjoyed giving and was rich enough to pay more than was required of him. But righteousness, represented by the day-long labourers, requires that those who work the most should receive the highest reward. The landowner could have chosen to give those who worked all day more than he had agreed to pay

them, but this is not the nature of agapē. If money is a metaphor for love, the parable demonstrates that when spontaneous love is combined with generosity, the order of justice is obsolete. This parable explains that agapē is spontaneous, unmotivated and indifferent to objective value.

In *The Prodigal Son,* the younger brother's behaviour clearly did not merit the warm welcome he received on returning home. The elder brother represents righteousness and, judged by the law, he is right. *He* should have been rewarded for he had always been faithful, and *his* behaviour was blameless. And yet, as Singer explains, the elder son did not miss out,

> The father dignifies this son by identifying with him . . . . it bestows upon the son a precious intimacy that he, too, doubtless takes for granted . . . . What he feels towards the elder is constant and repetitive, like our daily bread or the daily sunshine. This love symbolizes the *eternal* presence of God's agapē, without which nothing could survive. Whatever the older son has earned through righteousness, the love he receives is ultimately unmerited.[7]

The Prodigal Son illustrates that to love is to forgive and that righteousness is incompatible with love. Unlike the god of the Old Testament, the Christian God does not parcel out his love according to the law but bestows his agapē freely on righteous as well as sinners.

Agapē, then, as taught by Jesus is God's gift to humanity. He bestows his love generously and freely on everyone regardless of merit, "He makes the sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust" (Matt. 5:45). Jesus is the agapē hero, the supreme paradigm for compassionate, unconditional love.

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[7]Singer, Nature, I, 284-285.

In *The Art of Loving*, Erich Fromm compares agapē to mother's love. He argues that,

> Mother's love is unconditional, it is all-protective, all-enveloping; because it is unconditional it can also not be controlled or acquired. Its presence gives the loved person a sense of bliss; absence produces a sense of lostness and utter despair. Since mother loves her children because they are her children, and not because they are "good," obedient or fulfill her wishes and commands, mother's love is based on equality.[8]

In contrast to mother's love, Fromm explains that,

> Fatherly love is conditional love. Its principle is "I love you *because* you fulfill my expectations, because you do your duty, because you are like me." . . . fatherly love has to be deserved . . . it can be lost if one does not do what is expected.[9]

Agapē resembles mother's love as described by Fromm. It is the kind of love we all need, we all want. But Singer argues that Fromm's distinction between mother's and father's love cannot be upheld. He denies that a mother's love is typically unconditional, all-protective, all enveloping, beyond control or acquisition. It is conditioned by the way in which she needs her children and they need her. Furthermore, "The mother imposes demands and expectations. She is as much an authority as any father would be."[10] Singer concludes that agapē is not human love. It is divine love, "too glorious to belong to man."[11]

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[8]Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving (New York: Harper & Row, Perennial Library, 1956; repr. 1974), 54-55.

[9]Ibid., 36.

[10]Singer, Nature, 1, 301.

[11]Ibid., 307.

Like his forebears, Jesus emphasized that the way for humans to respond to God's love is to honour the commandments. When asked which commandment comes first, Jesus responds, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12:29ff). This response clearly shows that Jesus is firmly grounded in his heritage. But the way he and later Christians interpreted the commandments made a crucial difference from the past.

In the Old Testament, humans would show their love for God by adherence to the law and submission of their will in obedience to the will of God. In the New Testament, love of God by means of the law is also often emphasized.[12] Thus, Jesus is the preeminent example of Christian nomos. He could have avoided death, but sacrificed his life in compliance with God's plan, "My father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, thy will be done" (Matt. 26:42). With the death of Jesus, Christian nomos also comes to mean "dying to the will," completely and permanently and renunciation of the human world:

> The Jewish God was jealous lest other gods be placed ahead of him; but the Christian god is jealous even of his own creation. He demands more than just allegiance, much more than just scrupulous obedience. Nothing on earth must *really* matter to man. Human beings must care deeply only for God. All else leads to treason. One cannot serve two masters, and the flesh is always weak.[13]

The Early, Further Developments of Agapē

For Paul, Jesus' death was the key to a further development of agapē. Paul was

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[12]See Morgan, Love, 86.

[13]Singer, Nature, 1, 258.

born a Jew and converted to Christianity after the death of Jesus. He believed himself to be following Jesus' own teaching, just as Jesus had followed the teachings of earlier prophets (Rom. 15:18-21). He was well schooled in Greek knowledge and is credited with having built the foundation for Christianity. His writings, beginning in 49 or 51 A.D., represent the earliest references to the Christian tradition.

Paul believed that God and Jesus are one (Col. 1:15) and that God's love is seen foremost in the sacrifice of Jesus for the sins of humans, "God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). He interpreted the crucifixion of Jesus as God's own sacrifice. In the past man had proved his love for God by sacrifice of different kinds. But this sacrifice was different. With the death of Jesus, sacrifice is no longer the way of human beings to God but God's way to human beings (1 Cor. 15:12-29). Paul explains that the death of Jesus took away the sins of mankind and gave them the promise of eternal life: "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, . . . he was buried, . . . he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-6), and, later, John writes, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:16-18).

With the sacrifice of God himself, Paul is convinced that the law no longer expresses God's relations to humans or their relations to God: "If you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law" (Gal. 5:18; also Gal. 3:23), and "Now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law . . . . the righteousness of God through faith in

Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:21-25).

Jesus' death and resurrection are the supreme expressions of God's love. They offer the free gift of forgiveness to all Christians, salvation from sin, and eternal life. This is the very heart of Christianity which gives meaning and value to everything.

But this doctrine is problematic because it demeans the sinner's reality. If I have deeply wounded a fellow being, can I really walk away and live with a pure conscience because I know that God forgives the sinner? Clearly, in any normal person, this is not possible. Singer says it well when he argues that,

> Only for the dead can the past be erased. For those who live, it remains as facts to be confronted or ignored by what one does in the present. He is no saviour who enables man to ignore these facts or to pretend that they may be washed away. Such purification simplifies the moral life, but only as death does. What seems a love of humanity may thus be a further means of destroying it. What looks as a merciful descent may really be a secret scorn. It will be magical in changing man into *less* than what he really is.[14]

For Paul the crucifixion confirmed that God's love for humans preceded their love for God. He believed, furthermore, that without the crucifixion we would not have known God's love and that without God's agapē, Jesus would not have been crucified (1 Cor. 12:4-10). But although Paul implies that "God is love" he never actually said it. He speaks of the God of love (2 Cor. 13:11) and writes that agapē is the love of God in Jesus Christ

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[14]Singer, Nature, 1, 310.

(Rom. 8:39). It was John who formulated the term, when he said, "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for *God is love*" (1 John 4:7-9. Italics mine).

Paul preaches that God's love depends on faith in Jesus Christ, and faith means total dedication, a free surrender, to God. This is the only way to justification and salvation (Gal. 5:18; see also Rom. 1:11). And yet, the text is not clear. In a letter to the Romans, Paul writes, "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9-10), but elsewhere he says that "It [God's compassion] depends not upon man's will or exertion, but upon God's mercy" (Rom. 9:16). In other parts of the New Testament it is stated that agapē must be earned through good works[15] or that it is reserved for "those who believe."[16] Mark, for example, writes, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16). But the parables clearly indicate that agapē is the *free* bestowal of love. If God's agapē depends on works or faith, as Paul suggested, then it is not free nor is it spontaneous and unmotivated. Thus, Singer points out that "faith in Christ would seem to undercut the very concept of agapē on which it is based," and that "only if faith itself exists as a free, indiscriminate, unmotivated gift of God's love does the text escape inconsistency."[17] Morgan argues that "faith is not a

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[15]See, for example, Rom. 2:6-8, "For [God] will render to every man according to his works...."

[16]See Morgan, Love, 84-88.

[17]Singer, Nature, I, 292.

stratagem by which we win the game of eternal life, nor are works a tactic. God gives the game away, because he loves you."[18] Be that as it may, the problems of inconsistency will likely continue to trouble devoted Christians raised in a scientific age which demands clarity and precision.

All love comes from God, Paul says, "For in him all things were created" (Colossians 1:15) and John writes, "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). By themselves human beings have nothing to give. They love God because His unmotivated love has so overwhelmed them that they can do nothing else. The love they show towards their neighbour is therefore the love God has placed in them. In Luther's interpretation, "In the relation to his neighbour, the Christian can be likened to a tube, which by faith is open upwards, and by love downwards . . . he has nothing of his own to give. He is merely the tube, the channel, through which God's love flows."[19]

But critics argue that if Christians do not have a choice in loving God, then agapē can be accused of turning humans into objects of Divine manipulation.[20] Freedom of choice is a fundamental aspect of being fully human.[21] Without it, human beings are reduced to less than they naturally are. Secondly, if Christians are but "tubes" for God's

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[18]Morgan, Love, 88.

[19]From Luther, quoted in Anders Nygren, Agapē and Eros, trans. Philip G. Watson (Chicago: University Press, 1982), 735.

[20]Vincent Brümmer, The Model of Love (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 133.

[21]See CHAPTER 2, EROS IN PLATO'S *SYMPOSIUM.*

love, then their relationship to God becomes impersonal and, if they love because God loved them first, then agapē is no longer an appropriate term to describe the human attitude towards God:

> In relation to God, man is never spontaneous; he is not an independent centre of activity. His giving of himself to God is never more than a response. At its best and highest it is but a reflex of God's love, by which it is "motivated." Hence it is the very opposite of spontaneous and creative; it lacks all the essential marks of agapē.[22]

Loving relationships between humans, then, also miss out on the personal touch:

> Without God man could not bestow anything; nor would anything be worth bestowing. When man does bestow--doing good to his neighbour or sacrificing himself for the greater glory of God--he *exceeds* human nature. Either he is imitating Christ or he is serving as a vehicle for agapē.[23]

But, there is a further problem, for how can a person love his neighbour if he also is called upon to love God with *all* his heart and mind and soul? These are troubling questions and the Bible provides no clear answers.

When Paul says that Christians have been freed by Jesus' sacrifice from the sin to which they had been slaves, he partly has in mind sexual sins. In order for Christians to give themselves wholly to God, they must deny their sexuality. Chastity is superior to married sexual love: "To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion" (1 Cor. 7:8). Passionate love is reserved

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[22]Nygren, Agapē, 125-6.

[23]Singer, Nature, 1, 308.

for God: "Each of you knows how to take a wife for himself in holiness and honour, not in passion of lust like heathen who do not know God" (1 Thess. 4:4).

Paul's teachings in sexual matters betray his grounding in Hellenic learning. In Plato's *Symposium*, the highest expression of love is intellectual and non-sexual. The views of both Plato and Paul show a dualism that deems the spirit far superior to the body. This idea has reverberated from generation to generation throughout the history of Christianity. It has promoted a slanted view of human beings and deeply influenced the view Christians have of their sexual nature:

> The puritanical and ascetic traditions in Christianity take Paul at his words and implications: human flesh as such is weak and likely to lead us toward sin; this life on earth is to be endured; sexual behaviour is a distasteful reproductive duty rather than a human pleasure; all or nearly all fleshly temptations are to be repressed for the sake of the greater glory of the spirit. Joy of any earthly kind, especially bodily joy in sexual love, is always suspicious and usually condemned as pernicious.[24]

The concept of agapē is not clearly defined in the New Testament, nor is it clear whether agapē always refers to the same concept.[25] Thus, agapē can be read to mean God's love for humans as well as man's love for God and for his fellow man. This apparent confusion has led writers such as Walsh to talk about the *sacred sense* of the term which refers to God's love, while agapē in its *secular sense* creates value in the object loved by bestowing value upon it.[26] The problems of inconsistency are present even in

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[24]Morgan, Love, 93.

[25]See Singer, Nature, 1, 288-290.

[26]Walsh, Science, 30.

Paul's "hymn to love." Whose love does Paul describe? God's love or human God-inspired love?

> [1] Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. [2] Love never ends; as for prophesies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophesy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child: when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. [3] So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love (1 Cor. 13:4-14).

The first part of the hymn [1] seems to indicate God's love, for only His love can contain the perfection Paul has outlined. He clearly describes ideal love. The second part [2] seems to point to God-inspired human life. As Morgan interprets the text, pre-Christian lives were childish but "when the perfect comes, . . . this is real maturity. Christian lives, no longer childish, remain child-like." The final sentence [3] again seems to indicate God's love, "Faith hope and love abide . . . it is the love God bears toward man."[27]

Paul's hymn, perhaps better than any other writings in the New Testament, demonstrates the difference between Platonic and Christian concepts of love. Plato held that love was desire, a reaching out for what we do not have. Agapē, on the other hand, is compassionate love, love as giving. Clearly love is more than either of the two concepts suggest. The two together more accurately reflect the human experience of love for

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[27]Morgan, Love, 98.

humans both reach out in desire and give love.[28]

The Second Commandment

The second commandment is naturally of great importance to Christians who seek guidance on how to respond to God's love for them.[29] Jesus addressed their concerns in the parable *The Good Samaritan.*[30] A man going down the road was attacked, robbed, stripped and left half dead. By chance another man went down the same road. When he saw the wounded man he passed on the other side of the road. So did another man. But a third man who travelled the same road stopped and went to the beaten man. He tended to his wounds and brought him to an inn where he took care of him. The next day he gave two denarii to the innkeeper and told him to care for the wounded man. Whatever more it might cost he would repay him when he came back.

In this parable, the neighbour is the man you meet on the road, an unknown, a stranger. Anyone could be your neighbour. You love him by attending to his most urgent

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[28]See CHAPTER 2, EROS IN PLATO'S *SYMPOSIUM.*

[29]A great deal of scholarly literature is devoted to the interpretation of the second commandment. See, for example, Morgan, Love, 80; James A. Mohler, Dimensions of Love (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1975), 102; Stephen G. Post, A Theory of Agapē. On the Meaning of Christian Love (London, Toronto: Buckness University Press, 1990), 79; Gene Outka, "Universal Love and Impartiality," in The Love Commandments: Essays in Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy, eds. Edmund N. Santurri and William Werpelowski,1-103. (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1992); Otto Rank, Beyond Psychology (Philadelphia: E. Hauser, 1941; New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1958), 190-91.

[30]Luke 10:30-37. See also James Breech, The Silence of Jesus (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1982), 238.

needs. The parable invites Christians to move beyond their closed society, to reach out to others in love and thus to expand Christianity. Jesus emphasized that love of neighbour includes love of enemies (Matt. 5:44-46; also Luke 6: 32-35), and having received God's love freely Christians are called upon to pass it on freely to others (Matt. 10:8). But while these are worthy ideals, to pursue as far as appropriate, they run the danger of undermining friendship, family and community life, which inherently require a degree of partiality. As has been said: He who loves everybody loves nobody.

Whereas Jesus teaches that humans should love the other as they love themselves, Paul argues that in the love of neighbour there is no room for self-love,

> For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, fierce, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of religion but denying the power of it. Avoid such people. For among them are those who make their way into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and swayed by various impulses, who will listen to anybody and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth (2 Tim. 3:2-8).

Paul condemns self-love in the same breath he denounces unsavoury aspects of human nature and less than honourable human attitudes, which shows that Paul has little understanding of human nature. For, how is it possible to love others when we cannot love ourselves? Psychologists repeatedly point out that self-love is the basis for all other human love:

> My own self must be as much an object of my love as another person. *The affirmation of one's own life, happiness, growth, freedom is rooted in one's capacity to love*, i.e., in care, respect, responsibility, and knowledge. If an individual is able to love productively, he loves himself too; if he can love *only*

others, he cannot love at all.[31]

Paul and later Christians seem to confuse self-love with selfishness. But the selfish person loves himself too little, not too much, "In fact he hates himself."[32] And although it is true that a selfish person cannot love others, he cannot love himself either.

While Jesus admonished Christians "to love their neighbour as they love themselves," in John the norm for the love commandment becomes the love Jesus showed for his disciples (John 13:34). The paradigm is Jesus dying in obedience to the will of God for the salvation of humanity and thereby renouncing the human world. Paul writes, "We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). Also, "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth" (Colossians 3:2). Paul's own desire is aimed at another world, "My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better" (Phil. 1:23), and he implores his followers to turn away from the world,

> Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever (1 John 1:15-18).

Singer, for one, firmly rejects this otherworldly attitude,

> It is a life that negates, destroys, the life of man on earth. The Christian can renounce the world because Christ has done so for him. In coming to teach man how to love, Christ also teaches him to die, to die to nature, and to love that death. Would any people have made this idealization if they were capable of loving life? Is

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[31]Fromm, The Art, 50. Fromm's italics.

[32]Ibid., 51.

it worth making if the love of life is what we hope to achieve?[33]

In contrast to the ancient Jews who typically loved the world as an expression of God's great love, Paul is clearly influenced by his knowledge of Greek thought, and Plato, perhaps, who believed that the real world is beyond the human life world.[34] Thus liberal Christians rightly ascribe to Paul "the deplorable transformation of 'essential' Christianity into a mythical world-view of doubtful truth and misleading morality."[35]

Paul repeatedly urge Christians to be imitators of God (Eph. 5:1; 1 Thess. 1:14; 2 Thess. 3:7; 2 Tim. 1:13) and he beseeches them to adopt the attitude of the meek and lowly,

> Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony (Col. 3:12-15).

Thus, as Singer explains, "The Christian uses agapē *as if* it were human, making it the model for an ideal love between men."[36] By imitating Jesus and renouncing the world, the saint may also aspire towards holiness himself. John, for example, holds that "He who does good is of God" (3 John:1). But it is not possible to completely renounce the world. Christians, therefore, must support two attitudes at the same time. They must despise the

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[33]Singer, Love, 1, 309.

[34]See CHAPTER 2, EROS IN PLATO'S *SYMPOSIUM*.

[35]Morgan, Love, 82.

[36]Singer, Nature, 1, 304.

world, renounce their will, even hate themselves, and, secondly, they must care about the world as little as possible, and only do what is barely necessary for survival:

> However far it may contract, the will remains until something external destroys it. Even the saints admit that perfect conformity to God cannot be attained in this life. Are we to conclude then that the Christian attitude is logically untenable? Possibly so. But not if we see it as an idealization. As such it glorifies a spiritual need: the need to withhold final and ultimate love from anything as insubstantial as physical or psychological reality.[37]

History is full of agapē heroes or saints; in modern times, many consider the late Mother Theresa to be one. They are greatly admired for their seemingly selfless devotion to those who suffer.

But Friedrich Nietzsche has no patience with the Christian attitude. He argues that by making virtues of weakness, humility, self-disgust, poverty and chastity, agapē keeps man in a state of dependence and prevents his development of intelligence, initiative, and autonomy. Furthermore, agapē, in the form of pity, preserves that which is ripe for death. Thereby it interferes with the law of development which is also the law of selection. This law favours the strongest and the fittest, as does Nietzsche.[38] He, therefore, firmly rejects the Christian attitude.

Max Scheler agrees with Nietzsche. He argues that the agapēic attitude is a form of self-hatred and repressed envy directed against "wealth," "strength,"and "power," and *posing* as the opposite, which is Christian love. A person with this type of attitude believes

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[37]Ibid., 258.

[38]Friedrich Nietzsche, "Agape as Resentment and Suppression," in Norton and Kille, eds., Philosophies, 188.

that through self-abasement and self-renunciation he will gain the highest good and become equal to God. But, Scheler argues, resentment is not the essential motive of Christianity. These are the main points of his argument:

*Love is God's own essence. It springs from a spontaneous overflow of force. The value of love itself is love, not its results and achievements.

*Life is essentially expansion, development and growth. Life itself can be sacrificed for values higher than life. But this does not mean that all sacrifice runs counter to life and its advancement. For *this* kind of love, and sacrifice for the weak, the sick, and the small, springs from inner security and vital over-abundance.

**We have an urge to sacrifice* before we ever know why, for what, and for whom!

*When a Christian's spontaneous impulse of love and sacrifice finds a specific goal, he does not love a life *because* it is sick, poor, small and ugly but *despite* them. He helps in order to develop whatever may still be sound and positive.

Scheler concludes that the act of helping is the direct and adequate *expression* of love, not its meaning and purpose. Therefore nothing can be further removed from this genuine concept of Christian love than all kinds of "socialism," "social feeling," "altruism," and other subaltern modern things.[39]

In their critique of Scheler's position, David L. Norton and Mary Kille argue that Scheler equates Eros and agapē in seeking a higher value and then "commends agapē as the profounder in the common quest." Furthermore, Scheler's agapē seems to suppose that

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[39]Max Scheler, "Agapē as Superabundant Vitality: a Response to Nietzsche," in Norton and Kille, eds., Philosophies, 192.

humans are independent centres of activity and also independent sources of agapē, apart from God but like God. They conclude that Scheler's value directed agapē contradicts the principle of agapē's unconditionality and appears human-centered. It is consistent with the priority of self-love, but contrary to agapē's total absence of self-love.[40]

In a different context, Nygren also argues that love towards God could very well be Eros[41] and others point to Eros as the source of the human motivation.[42] Otto Rank explains,

> This reaching out for something bigger than any kind of government, state or even nation, originated in the individual's need for expansion beyond the realm of his self, his environment, indeed, early life itself. In this sense, the individual is not striving for survival but is reaching for some kind of "beyond," be it in terms of another person, a group, a cause, a faith to which he can submit, because he thereby expands himself.[43]

Rank suggests that it is "the positive affirmation of the will wanting to surrender to something bigger than the self."[44] For the Christian, it is ultimately sacrificial love.

I would suggest that those who consciously or through habit put on the cloak of Christian love as recommended by Paul and submit themselves to the will of God are other-directed. As a result they belittle their human ability to think and act by themselves. Those who practise Christian love in the spirit of Eros, on the other hand, are inner-

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[40]Norton and Kille, eds., Philosophies, 192.

[41]Nygren, Agapē, 212.

[42]See CHAPTER 1, EROS.

[43]Rank, Beyond, 194-95.

[44]Ibid., 190.

directed, actively taking personal responsibility, acting and willing not only for the good of others but for themselves as well. In the final analysis the question must be: which attitude serves humanity best?

Summary

In Christianity, God *is* love, perfect love. His over-abundant nature overflows and bestows love freely on humans for all eternity. God's love is spontaneous and unmotivated and indifferent to objective value. Thus, worthy, unworthy, righteous and sinners are all equally deserving of His love. Nothing has value prior to God's love. Agapē creates value where none existed before. Agapē is compassionate love, it is God's way to humans. There is from their side nothing that can move God to love.[45] God's love is first and foremost seen in Jesus' death and resurrection. This is God's own sacrifice which frees human beings from sin and gives the promise of eternal life in God's world beyond.

In response to God's love for them, Christians are admonished, like their forbears, to love God and to love their neighbour. This has led to a secular interpretation of agapē which refers to Christians who love God by emulating the life and work of Jesus. Many sacrifice their lives in service of the sick, the poor and the wretched.

Jesus' crucifixion and death also exemplified a turning away from this world. Christians give their loyalty and devotion to God. As a consequence they reject the human world. For this is not the real world and Christian believers cannot truly enjoy and

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[45]See Nygren, "The Content of Agapē," in Norton and Kille, eds., Philosophies, 176.

appreciate its beauty. The Christian, therefore, has little interest in improving society, making the world a better place.[46]

> The goodness of life, when life is worth living, comes as a spontaneous and unmerited gift. To the Christian, however, nature and time are consecrated to the devil. Man must go beyond them: his salvation lies in supernature, in eternity. . . . Because he thinks that mankind is necessarily corrupt, the Christian despairs of ever loving properly within his human nature. He therefore postulates a love untainted by this world, a transcendental love without which there could be no empirical love, a love that miraculously transforms human nature and gives it the capacity for loving. Judaeo/Christian love expects too little of men--not too much. The idealizations in agapē seek to change man by magical means instead of exploring the ways in which his sheer humanity may itself augment the wonders of nature.[47]

In a world where love is in short supply and where loneliness abounds, it is difficult to dismiss the appeal of a loving god who embraces everyone even the lowliest creature in his overabundant, unconditional love. The idea fulfills a deeply felt human need for love, for belonging, for wholeness. It offers a refuge, an escape from the world. But without fostering an appreciation and a commitment to the human world it does little to ameliorate conditions as they actually exist. Singer explains that the Christian attitude glorifies a spiritual need, "the need to withhold final and ultimate love from anything as insubstantial as physical or psychological reality."[48] But I would suggest this need is one we must keep

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[46]Rudolf Bultmann, Ernst Lohmeyer, Julius Schniewind, Helmut Thielicke and Austin Farrer, Kerygma and Myth. A Theological Debate (New York: Harper & Row, Harper Torchbooks/The Cloister Library, 1966), 14.

[47]Singer, Nature, 1, 308.

[48]Ibid., 258.

in check, because physical and psychological reality are the human lot. If we do not love that, there will be nothing left to love.

CHAPTER 5

COURTLY LOVE

The term "courtly love" is an invention by Gaston Paris. He used it in 1883 to describe a kind of love he discovered in the relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere in the twelfth century romance, *Conte de la Charette*, by Chrétien de Troyes. He called it amour courtois which was soon translated into the English, "courtly love." When he defined the meaning of this love, in addition to Chrétien's romance, Paris also relied on another twelfth century book, namely *De Amore*, or, in translation, *The Art of Courtly Love* by Andreas Capellanus. Both Chrétien and Andreas were attached to the Court of Champagne in Poitiers under Eleanor of Aquitaine and her daughter Marie.[1] Paris found that amour courtois had at least four distinctive characteristics: (1) it was illegitimate and furtive; (2) the lover was inferior and insecure while the beloved was elevated, haughty, even disdainful; (3) the lover must earn the lady's affection by undergoing many tests of his prowess, valour and devotion; (4) love was an art and a science, subject to many rules and regulations, like courtesy in general.[2]

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[1]Maurice Valency, In Praise of Love. An Introduction to the Love-Poetry of the Renaissance (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1958), VIII.

[2]Gaston Paris, "L'Amour Courtois," Romania XII (1883), 519. Quoted by John C. Moore, "'Courtly Love': A Problem of Terminology," Journal of the History of Ideas 40, no. 4 (October-December 1979), 621-22.

Courtly love became the common expression used by medieval scholars to describe many different kinds of love between a man and a woman in the twelfth century. Thus John C. Moore writes that "amour courtois is the creature of every wind stirred up by scholars,"[3] while John F. Benton argues that courtly love has no specific content and that it is not a medieval term.[4] Moshe Lazar identified at least three different versions of courtly love. In addition to troubadour love or fin' amors, as it was called at the time, there was Tristan love and conjugal love.[5] Troubadour love involves the worship of an idealized lady and emphasizes frustrated sexual desire which is never resolved. The Tristan myth has none of this. In *Tristan*,[6] love is adulterous, resulting in conflicting obligations and loyalties. Finally, twelfth century romances reveal that sexual love was not always illicit or adulterous.[7] They describe love between young men and women who did marry and "lived happily ever after" but they tell us nothing about conjugal life.

While Singer agrees that the term "courtly love" is misleading, he points out that ideas about love did undergo a new and important development in the twelfth century. For the first time in the history of ideas, sexual love between a man and a woman became

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[3]Moore, "Courtly Love," 626.

[4]John F. Benton, "Clio and Venus: An Historical View of Medieval Love," in The Meaning of Courtly Love, ed. F. X. Newman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1968), 36.

[5]Moore, "Courtly Love," 625.

[6]Gottfried von Strassburg, Tristan, trans. and intro. A. T. Hatto (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books 1960, repr. 1967).

[7]See, for example, "Aucassin and Nicolette," in The Ways of Love: Eleven Romances of Medieval France, trans. Norma Lorre Goodrich (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 222-23.

something of value *in itself*, something to be enjoyed and celebrated. Since it was also a love that involved the courts and courtliness, Singer feels that it is wiser to reformulate the definition than to dismiss it altogether.[8] In this chapter, I am using the term broadly to indicate love between a man and a woman as practised in the courts of Europe in the twelfth century.

The chapter is divided in five parts. First, I will look at the possible origins of courtly love. Second, I will examine the concept of fin' amors or troubadour love. With reference to *De Amore* by Andreas Capellanus, I will then consider both "courtly" and "love" and next, courtly love as expressed in *Tristan* by Gottfried von Strassburg. The chapter concludes with a summary of courtly love.

Possible Origins of Courtly Love

Although little is known about the origin of courtly love, the Judaeo/Christian tradition can almost certainly be ruled out. In Christianity, all human love originates in God and is subordinated to his love. Only God is worthy of passionate love. Although Paul maintains that spouses love each other, conjugal love means affection, good will and friendship between them. In *The Allegory of Love*, C. S. Lewis writes that

> Christianity did not bring about any idealization of human love: the medieval Church did not encourage reverence for women, nor did it consider sexual passion, however refined, could ever become a "noble emotion." . . . Within the bonds of holy matrimony medieval Christianity found room for innocent sexuality, but ardent love, conjugal or extra-conjugal, was regarded as wicked and morally

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[8]Irving Singer, The Nature of Love, vol. 2, Courtly and Romantic (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984; paperback edition, 1987), 33.

reprehensible.[9]

In the words of Valency,

> That love which stopped short of God would be in the Christian view no more than lust. "I mean by love (*caritas*)," wrote St. Augustine . . . "that affection of the mind which aims at the enjoyment of God for His own sake, and the enjoyment of oneself and one's neighbour in subordination to God; by lust (*cupiditas*) I mean that movement of the soul which aims at enjoying oneself and one's neighbour and other corporeal things without reference to God." . . . It seems obvious that the romantic passion would in every case be in contradiction of the Christian moral order, for any love that turned aside from the adoration of the Father must be considered a deviation from the path of righteousness. To love the beauty of woman for itself was to lose one's way in a labyrinth that led nowhere, except perhaps to hell. . . . But it was permissible to love the beauty of God in woman.[10]

The Christian tradition sanctions human love only when it is seen as a reflection of God's love. Human love for its own sake is both sinful and harmful and, since courtly love celebrates passionate human attachments by themselves, it is unlikely that its roots can be traced to Christianity. Courtly love developed apart from the Church and, as I shall argue below, from the state as well, and independently of any other love the lovers might also have for God.

The Judaeo/Christian religion is associated with a long tradition of patriarchy and male domination in general.[11] In the Middle Ages, the Christian attitude was supported and complemented by the state. Marriages were arranged as a means of increasing wealth

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[9]C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love. A Study of Medieval Tradition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), 8. Quoted in Roger Boase, The Origin and Meaning of Courtly Love (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977), 35.

[10]Valency, In Praise, 23.

[11]See CHAPTER 7, OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS: TOWARD HOLISTIC LOVE.

and property and, to this end, women were traded like chattel to men they often did not know or care for. C. S. Lewis argues that it was exactly the Christian attitude to passionate love which, "together with the utilitarian character of medieval marriages, prevented love from being connected with the married state."[12]

Denis de Rougemont and Alexander J. Denomy both argue that courtly love was influenced by heresies of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[13] De Rougemont holds that courtly love was an expression of the Cathar heresy.[14] Denomy, on the other hand, argues that although courtly love was heretical, it was not Catharist but an expression of Averroism, a Moslem heresy which held that two opposite suggestions can be true at the same time, one by reason and one by faith. In this interpretation, courtly love is in harmony with nature and reason, but also with the opposite, Christian love, in agreement with faith and revelation.[15]

There is evidence that courtly love was inspired by Ovid's poetry and by Hispania/Arabic writings by, among others, Ibn Hazm. Ovid's poetry is openly sexual, the object of his love is sexual conquest. While Ibn Hazm does not ignore the physical aspects of love he emphasizes that the union of souls is finer. He argues that love is a reunion of

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[12]Boase, Origin, 36.

[13]See, Alexander J. Denomy, The Heresy of Courtly Love (Boston College Candlemas Lectures on Christian Literature. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965). See also Denis de Rougemont, Love in the Western World (New York: Pantheon Books, 1940; Harper & Row, 1974).

[14]De Rougemont, Love, 79.

[15]Moore, "Courtly Love," 624. Also Denomy, Heresy, 30f.

parts of the soul which were separated in creation. Courtly love, and especially fin' amors, clearly reflects these two traditions as it, too, emphasizes sexual attraction as well as the subordination of the purely sexual to a spiritual harmony between souls.[16]

A final possible source of courtly love was the influence of women in court, particularly the Court of Champagne during the reign of Comtesse Marie, daughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine.[17]

Fin' Amors

The troubadours of the twelfth century were both performers and composers. Some were courtiers, some were wanderers, and some were great artists. Those in Provence were the first to express the concept of fin' amors: "Honest love, pure love, perfect love."[18] Fin' amors was patterned on fealty which was prevalent in Europe at the time. Under the rules of feudalism, the vassal served his lord and in return for his service, the lord was obligated to maintain and support him. In fin' amors, contrary to the usual relations between a man and a woman in the twelfth century, the knight chose to be submissive to a lady of the nobility. She was his lord.

The troubadours invented the four main ideas of courtly love, listed by Paris.[19] Fin'

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[16]See Singer, Nature, 2, 30. Also John J. Parry, "Chivalric Love," in Norton and Kille, eds., Philosophies, 234-240; de Rougemont, Love, 82; John C. Moore, Love in Twelfth-Century France (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), 86.

[17]Valency, In Praise, VIII.

[18]Ibid., 142.

[19]See the introduction to this chapter.

amors, then, is adulterous love which celebrates unsatisfied and ever increasing, passionate, sexual desire, which is ennobling. Furthermore, the beloved is elevated to a position of preeminence in relation to the lover. The purpose of fin' amors is the moral improvement of the lover and his goal is perfection. It is the responsibility of the lady to encourage the lover to keep on striving towards his goal. But although the lady is at the centre of this love, fin' amors was developed in the male imagination and is primarily concerned with the love of the knight who has chosen to be submissive to a lady of the nobility.

The lady the knight claimed to love was often remote. He frequently did not know her. She was an incentive, a means to an end. It was therefore not so much a love for the lady as the person she happened to be, but the fantasy about her, that inspired the knight to progressive growth in virtue. In fact, "longing for her [was] more valuable than possessing her."[20] Fin' amors, in the words of Valency, "was not, properly speaking, a passion at all. It was a cult, a creed which based the well-being of man upon the love of woman and exalted this love accordingly."[21] Fin' amors was the source of all virtue and men were worthless without it. It was therefore important for all men to practice love if they wanted to achieve virtue and goodness.

Over the span of two centuries and with more than four hundred troubadours from

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[20]Frederick Goldin, "The Array of Perspectives in the Early Courtly Love Lyric," in In Pursuit of Perfection, Courtly Love in Medieval Literature, eds. Joan M. Ferrante & George D. Economou (Port Washington, New York: National University Publications, 1975), 55.

[21]Valency, In Praise, 5.

all parts of society and continental Europe, there was naturally a wide variation in the love themes they presented. Even within the poetry of a single troubadour different ideas of love were expressed:

> The alternative conceptions in Bernard [de Ventadour] include consummation as well as frustration, adultery as well as chastity, reciprocity and admiration between equals as well as reverence for the distant beloved. If Bernard can prostrate himself, saying "Good lady, I ask you for nothing/but to take me for your servant,/for I will serve you as my good lord,/whatever wages come my way," he can also assert that "The love of two true lovers lies/in their mutual will and pleasure;/nothing can be good in it/if they are not equal in desire."[22]

The theme of the eventual marriage of courtly lovers is common in medieval literature,[23] and even though the troubadours had little to say about conjugal love they did express the feelings that love based on desire was not always the ideal beginning to marriage but could be a source of trouble,[24] and that conjugal love was possible and even preferable to true love, "indeed sacred."[25]

Fin' amors was typically love at first sight, a wound to the eye caused by the image of the beloved. Like a dart it went directly to the heart where it lodged itself. The wound did not usually cause death. But fin' amors was considered a kind of madness because, once smitten, a lover's mind could not function properly and love-sickness caused by

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[22]Singer, Nature, 2, 56-57.

[23]Benton, "Clio," 22.

[24]Ibid., 23.

[25]W. T. H. Jackson, "The *De Amore* of Andreas Capellanus and the Practice of Love at Court," The Romanic Review XLIX, vol. 48-49, 243.

frustrated sexual desire was common. The symptoms were loss of appetite, of flesh, pallor, love of solitude, and tearfulness especially when music was played,[26]

> The lover sighed incessantly. Since each sigh came from the heart and cost it a drop of blood, his face grew pale, betraying his anaemia. For lack of spirit, his bodily members failed. He froze and burned with love's fever, trembling constantly, consumed inwardly with excessive heat, outwardly chilled. In addition he suffered psychic tortures beyond description--jealousy, doubt, fear, and incessant inner debate. He cut indeed a pitiable figure in the eyes of the world.[27]

Unpleasant though it was, it was important that one should feel the sickness of love.

Since the lover was constantly observed in court, he had to be careful and discrete. Fear of discovery was always present. It was safer to keep his love a secret and this required great self-discipline. He must curb aggressive and impulsive behaviour and foster gentleness and humility. He must keep his distance, observe proper etiquette, and be polite, decent and composed. These traits must be shown in his songs as well; they must not be out of bounds. The lady he sings about must have no identifying characteristics. In troubadour lyrics, therefore, the ladies are all alike, "The medieval glamour-girl, blonde, slender, round-armed, straight-nosed, grey-eyed, white-skinned, with her small red smiling mouth, her sparkling teeth, her small firm breasts and slim waist."[28] The discipline that love imposed on the knight was ennobling.

Fin' amors was ideally chaste love. It emphasized the union of heart and soul but not the physical possession of the beloved. So, the lover spent much time yearning and

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[26]Valency, In Praise, 154.

[27]Ibid., 155.

[28]Ibid., 173.

longing for his beloved and patience was an asset:

> My Lady Fair-in-Person, more gracefully formed than a flower, have for me some measure of indulgence since for you I die of longing and desire--this you can prove by my complexion which, when I behold you, changes and fades away. Wherefore it would be charity and courtliness that humility should take you, showing mercy to one afflicted and deprived of all things good.[29]

The lady, being his master, would subject the lover to feats of prowess in order to test his valour and courage. She had to make sure that he would suffer for love, that he had a gentle heart, and that he was not just consumed by lust. To earn her love, he, in turn, would make the trials as hard for himself as he could.

As a first step in return for his love, the lady might give the lover a small token as a sign of recognition, a ring, perhaps, or a ribbon but her response should not reflect a sense of obligation as in feudalism. It was important that it was given freely. When these signs of affection were forthcoming, and they were not always, the pain of frustrated desire was intermingled with joy. From this joy came virtue. The lady could later demonstrate her affection by not having any other lovers, by submitting to sexual intimacy only with her husband, or the lovers might exchange a kiss, embrace or fondle each other but, as a rule, they would not enter into full carnal intercourse.

Fin' amors was incompatible with marriage for two main reasons. By marrying each other the lovers become equals. It is therefore impossible for the lover to maintain a submissive posture. But, more importantly, the lady ceases to be the goal towards which the lover strives. Fin' amors, then, is forever static. The knight is forever suppliant and the

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[29]Aimeric de Péguilhan, in Anthology of Troubadour Lyric Poetry, ed. & trans. Alan R. Press (Edinburgh: University Press, 1971), 225.

lady is forever withholding.

In any case, the troubadours were not interested in undermining marriage. Benton suggests that their songs did not always imply an emotional commitment, "Contemporaries could assume that the singer of love was not necessarily courting a woman but only being courteous."[30] Such poetry increased the honour and profit of the singer. Equally important was the knowledge that the knight who betrayed his lord by adulterous behaviour was guilty of treason which was punishable by death.[31]

A knight who fell in love with a particular lady lost his ability to love any other lady at the same time and in the same way. He fell in love with *that* woman. As a consequence, he would be jealous of all other men because he would realize that if his lady loved them, she could not love him exclusively as courtly love requires. Singer points out that, "Jealousy was needed to defend a love that improves the character of human beings."[32]

Over time, the spiritual element of fin' amors became increasingly dominant until, near the end of the thirteenth century, the sensual component almost vanished.[33] By then, the troubadours assigned to love the power of bringing about a state of piety and holy intuition. This change facilitated a reconciliation of the love of women with the love of

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[30]Benton, "Clio," 30.

[31]Ibid., 26-27.

[32]Singer, Love, 2, 27.

[33]Valency, In Praise, 180.

God. In the final phase the troubadours sang in adoration of Virgin Mary.[34] By the beginning of fourteenth century, the era of Provençal song was partly over.

Fin' amors combined new ideas with old ideas which were re-interpreted to harmonize with the new and thereby a new set of ideals was created. In *The Symposium*, Plato, in the voice of Diotima, argues that perfection is the goal of love. Plato's ladder of love could enable only the philosopher to reach the eternal forms of perfect beauty and goodness, and in the process the philosopher would become beautiful, good and perfect as well. Fin' amors used a particular noble lady to reach a similar goal. But fin' amors should not be confused with Platonic love. Plato's theory was based on dualism according to which humans are divided beings with a superior spirit locked in an inferior body. Because of his dualistic view, Plato's love at the highest level was of the spirit and did not involve another human being. It was an intellectual and mystical union with the good and the beautiful. By contrast, troubadour love although it, too, aimed at perfection, was grounded in sensuous longing and frustration caused by unfulfilled sexual desire.

Plato's ideas were later adopted by Christians who preached that God was perfection and admonished Christians to be perfect as their heavenly father.[35] When the troubadours began to worship the perfection in a particular lady of the nobility and gave their loyalty to her, the Christian Church naturally felt threatened. But, fin' amors, for the first time in the history of the Western world, recognized women as a source for good.

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[34]Ibid., 191.

[35]Matt. 5:48.

Still, troubadour love was seen through the eyes of the male. It expressed male fantasy in a male oriented world and love had no effect on the lady's social standing.

From a human perspective, fin' amors reflects a fundamental need for self-expansion which Elaine and Arthur Aron have defined as the Eros in us.[36] Self-expansion in fin' amors means striving for perfection by way of the knightly virtues.[37] Fin' amors then was both religious, social and erotic in its goal, expressing as it did both the ideals of religion and society but at the same time also human nature.

> The knight, his lady, that is to say, the hero who serves for love, this is the primary and invariable motif from which erotic fantasy will always start. It is sensuality transformed into the craving for self-sacrifice, into the desire of the male to show his courage, to incur danger, to be strong, to suffer and to bleed for his lady-love.[38]

The troubadours respected society and played according to the rules, not of the Church but of the aristocracy, but rules nevertheless. This is one of the topics in *De Amore* which follows below.

De Amore

Concepts of love always develop within the context of a certain time and place which impose their particular form and style. Courtly love evolved under the auspices of the courts in Europe and found expression within the boundaries of courtly rules and

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[36]Aron, Love, 23-27. See also CHAPTER 1, EROS.

[37]The five virtues of a medieval knight were temperance, courage, love, loyalty, and courtesy. Joseph Campbell with Bill Moyers, The Power of Myth, ed. Betty Sue Flowers (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 195.

[38]Johan Huizinga, "Conventions of Chivalric Love," in Philosophies, eds. Norton and Kille, 226.

regulations invented by the aristocracy. Against the prevailing coarseness and brutality of the age, these rules were a social necessity. They emphasized courtly manners and sexual restraint. In the words of Johan Huizinga, "Only by constructing a system of forms and rules for the vehement emotions can barbarity be escaped."[39] Courtliness, then, set the gentleman apart from the uncouth and unruly. But because of its emphasis on courtesy, courtly love could always turn into a game of artful persuasion based on a play of words and expressed without sincerity. Many books were written on the topic of courtliness.[40] One such book which has survived from the twelfth century is *De Amore*, or, in its English translation, *The Art of Courtly Love*.[41]

De Amore consists of three books in one. In all three, Andreas instructs his young friend Walter in the art of love. In the first book, he defines love and explains how it may be acquired. According to Andreas,

> Love is a certain inborn suffering derived from the sight of and excessive meditation upon the beauty of the opposite sex, which causes each one to wish above all things the embraces of the other and by common desire to carry out all of love's precepts in the other's embrace (28).[42]

In contrast to Christian love which emphasizes love of God with heart and soul and mind,

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[39]Ibid., 231-232.

[40]C. Hugh Holman, A Handbook to Literature (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, The Odyssey Press, 1936, repr. 1972), 126.

[41]Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love, intro., trans. and notes John Jay Parry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960; repr. 1990).

[42]All page numbers located within the text, in the context of Andreas Capellanus, refer to his book, The Art of Love.

courtly love features sensuous longing which arises from the unfulfilled desire for the physical possession of the beloved. It is a sexual love which, as Andreas explains, has an ennobling effect,

> O what a wonderful thing is love, which makes a man shine with so many virtues and teaches everyone, no matter who he is, so many good traits of character! There is another thing about love that we should not praise in a few words: it adorns a man, so to speak, with the virtue of chastity, because he who shines with the light of one love can hardly think of embracing another woman, even a beautiful one. For when he thinks deeply of his beloved the sight of any other woman seems to his mind rough and rude (31-32).

In addition to the ennobling character of courtly love Andreas extols the virtues of chastity and exclusivity: loving one, the courtly lover cannot love any other.

Love can be obtained by five means: a beautiful figure, excellence of character, extreme readiness of speech, great wealth, and "the readiness with which one grants that which is sought" (33). But Andreas points out that only the first three are important and, furthermore, that the lover should not look for beauty as much as for excellence, for "character alone is worthy of the crown of love" (35).

He demonstrates the game of love through eight dialogues with men and women of various social standings. The strategy for winning over the woman, which is the purpose of the game, changes according to the social position of the participants. Andreas does not consider anyone below the middle class. The following excerpt from the first dialogue between a man of the middle class and a woman of the same class is a good example of the verbal skills and courtly persuasion techniques used by hopeful lovers:

> When the Divine Being made you there was nothing that He left undone. I know that there is no defect in your beauty, none in your good sense, none in you at all except, it seems to me, that you have enriched no one by your love. I marvel

> greatly that Love permits so beautiful and so sensible a woman to serve for long outside his camp. O if you should take service with Love, blessed above all others will that man be whom you shall crown with your love! Now if I, by my merits, might be worthy of such an honour, no lover in the world could really be compared with me (37).

The courtly lover clearly schemes to win the woman through excessive and insincere flattery, but the woman is not at all captured by his speech:

> You seem to be telling fibs, since although I do not have a beautiful figure you extol me as beautiful beyond all other women and although I lack the ornament of wisdom you praise my good sense (37).

Walter is told that a woman of nobility who lacks sophistication can be won over in the same manner as a woman of the middle class, i.e., with excessive praise. But if she is "wise and shrewd" the man must be careful not to overdo his flattery in case she should think that he is not very good at the art of conversation and believes him to be a fool. Instead he must resort to humility, "if love compels me to say anything aimless or foolish, I ask Your Nobility to endure it patiently and to reprove me gently" (44). When a man of higher nobility speaks to a woman of the same class, he must use soft and gentle words and take care not to say anything that would seem to deserve a rebuke. He can appeal to her, but he cannot contradict her. However, in the end, none of the dialogues shows that a lady has been won over and therefore they seem to defeat the purpose of the instruction.

During the first dialogue, the point is made that a lowly birth might be ennobled by excellence of character (38). This is followed up in the next conversation between a man of middle class and a woman of the nobility when the man says that, "a man's nobility is determined more by his character than by his birth" (49). A later dialogue again affirms that a man who seeks the love of a woman of the higher nobility ought to have the most

excellent character. But before he deserves her love, the woman must test his constancy by many trials. The woman is fully in control of the affair, and only if, after a long probation, she finds him to be worthy, may he be allowed to hope for her love. It is her decision to accept or refuse it, "and no one has a right to be injured thereby" (87). But although good character may ennoble a common man, it cannot change his social standing and make him a lord. This can only be done by the prince who alone has the power to add nobility to good character to whom he pleases. Andreas emphasizes that women are the cause of all that is good and praiseworthy in a man, "Every man should strive with all his might to be of service to ladies so that he may shine by their grace" (108). The woman in turn must keep good men set upon doing good deeds and must honour every man according to merit for, "Without these rewards no man can be of use in this life or be considered worthy of any praise" (108).

Among the things the hopeful lover must and must not do to earn the love of a lady of the nobility are the following: he must not be avaricious but generous and "give it with such a spirit that it may seem more pleasing and acceptable to his feelings to give the thing to his friend than to keep possession of it himself" (59). He must feed the hungry; show due respect for his lord; not utter blasphemy against God; be humble and serve everybody; not utter falsehood; not be quarrelsome; be moderate in laughter and about gambling, courageous in battle, wise, cautious and clever; never cheat anybody with false promises; go to church frequently and be truthful in everything (60-61). Clearly Andreas did not invent these guidelines. They were based in common, everyday and Christian morality. This is further evident when Andreas reveals the twelve main rules in love in

language and style similar to the Biblical commandments:

I. Thou shalt avoid avarice like the deadly pestilence and shalt embrace its opposite.
II. Thou shalt keep yourself chaste for the sake of her whom thou lovest.
III. Thou shalt not knowingly strive to break up a correct love affair that someone else is engaged in.
IV. Thou shalt not choose for thy love anyone whom a natural sense of shame forbids thee to marry.
V. Be mindful completely to avoid falsehood.
VI. Thou shalt not have many who know of thy love affair.
VII. Being obedient in all things to the commands of ladies, thou shalt ever strive to ally thyself to the service of Love.
VIII. In giving and receiving love's solaces let modesty be ever present.
IX. Thou shalt speak no evil.
X. Thou shalt not be a revealer of love affairs.
XI. Thou shalt be in all things polite and courteous.
XII. In practising the solaces of love thou shalt not exceed the desires of thy lover (81-82).

Andreas tells Walter that love cannot exist without jealousy (91) and that jealousy is praiseworthy in every man who is experienced in love. It is a true emotion. It causes us to fear that our love does not measure up to the desire of the beloved, and that our love may not be returned. It also includes suspicion of the beloved, "but without any shameful thought" (102). Since a husband cannot suspect his wife without thinking that such behaviour on her part is shameful, a jealous husband is deemed ridiculous. Andreas argues that jealousy cannot have its natural place between husband and wife, and since love and jealousy always go together, love between them must necessarily cease.

Courtly love is the cause of uneasiness vis-à-vis the teachings of the Church. One woman points out that love greatly offends God and seems to bring untold pains to the lovers. So, she asks, "What good can there be in a deed by which the Heavenly Bridegroom is offended and one's neighbour is injured?" Love, rather, seems a thing to be

feared. But in his response, the man says that he cannot believe God could be seriously offended by love for it, like many other things, is motivated by nature and can be made clean by an easy repentance. He argues, furthermore, that it does not seem right to condemn as a sin the thing from which the highest good in this life originates and without which no man could be considered worthy of praise (111). But the man provides no definitive answer, and the uneasiness expressed by the woman remains unresolved.

In a different argument, the distinction is made between pure and mixed love. Pure love "binds together the hearts of two lovers with every feeling and delight" (122). This love consists of the contemplation of the mind and affection of the heart. It permits a kiss and "the embrace and the modest contact with the nude lover, omitting the final solace, for that is not permitted to those who love purely." This love is preferable because it is virtuous and promotes excellence of character. No injury results from it and "God sees very little offence in it" (122). In contrast, mixed love "gets its effect from every delight of the flesh and culminates in the final act of Venus" (122). This kind of love does not last. Often there are regrets, one's neighbour is injured, and "the heavenly King is offended and from it come very great danger" (122). But it, too, is real love. As such it is praiseworthy, the source of good things, although grave dangers threaten from it. Andreas approves of both pure and mixed love (122).

In summary, the first book explains that love is suffering caused by unfulfilled sexual desire. This love is ennobling. It is chaste and exclusive love, best obtained by excellence of character. A woman has the responsibility to encourage a lover to ever higher achievements. She is the incentive and cause of all that is good and praiseworthy in

a man, and she alone has the power to decide whether to accept or reject his love. Without the love of a woman, a man is worthless and all men must therefore strive to obtain it, but with the knowledge that his love exists in an uneasy relation with the Church.

In the second book, Andreas explains how love may be retained. It is written in a question and answer format and discusses specific cases which, supposedly, are judged by ladies of the aristocracy in formal courts of love.

In the context of this dissertation, however, the third book, is of greater interest. It differs entirely in both tone and intent from the previous two. In this book, Andreas condemns the love he praised before, "Any man who devotes his efforts to love loses all his usefulness" (187). Therefore, "Any wise man is bound to avoid all the deeds of love and to oppose all its mandates" (187). By refraining from seeking the life of a lover Walter may win an eternal, and deserve a greater, reward from God.

Andreas further states that God hates and will punish those who engage in the works of Venus (187). Among the many other evils of courtly love, he mentions that

> We injure our neighbour whom every man is bidden to love as himself (188).
> Love is the only sin that defiles both body and soul (189).
> Love brings unbearable torture to all men during their lifetimes. After they are dead it makes them suffer infinitely greater ones (191).
> Chastity and repression of sexual desires are virtues. Their opposites, "lust and delight of the flesh" are vices (192).
> Love frequently leads men to warfare (196).
> It breaks up marriages and without reason turns a man from his wife (196).

Andreas concludes that nothing good comes from a love that is contrary to the will of God, "All sorts of wickedness come from love and nothing good can be found to spring

from it, but only untold torments for mankind" (197). He then reveals that his intention all along has been to dissuade Walter from love for, "Bodily purity and fleshly abstinence, however, are things that every man should have in the presence of God. Walter should preserve them by all means because, if they are neglected, no good in man can be completely perfect" (198). Andreas further holds that "In a wise man wisdom loses its function if he loves," and that "The mutual love which you seek in a woman you cannot find, for no woman ever loved a man or could bind herself to a lover in the mutual bonds of love" (200). In contrast to the two first books, where Andreas describes women as perfect in every sense and the source of all that is good, he now asserts that they are the root of all evil. He argues at length that women are greedy, slaves to their belly, inconsistent, fickle in their speech, disobedient and impatient of restraint, spotted with the sin of pride and desirous of arrogance, liars, drunkards, babblers, no keepers of secrets, too much given to wantonness, prone to every evil, and never loving any man in their hearts (201). Andreas cautions Walter that now, when he knows the rules of love, by refusing them, God will be favourably disposed to him (212).

De Amore is a strange book and the intentions Andreas had in mind when he wrote it are not known. Critics have generally aimed their comments at the discrepancy between the two first and the third book. According to Moore, nearly all have treated *De Amore* as a serious treatise on courtly love.[43] But W. T. H. Jackson disagrees. He argues that the

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[43]Moore, "Courtly Love," 626.

book is not intended to be serious. It is a collection of things Andreas had heard at court,[44] a practical manual for those who wanted to love like gentlemen.[45] D. W. Robertson argues that Andreas presents a double lesson. The first two books are ironical whereas the third shows Andreas' true feelings. He describes the love that leads to the "delights of the flesh" but which at the same time alienates the lover from the grace of God. Andreas rejects this love.[46]

Denomy contends that *De Amore* is an example of double truth: two simultaneous and contrary truths. One is based on faith, the other on natural reason. Reason and nature demand that man become a lover and that he seek pleasures of the flesh so that he might be ennobled. But the teachings of the Church demand that he forsake all human love and seek the love of God alone. Whereas the first books express reason and human nature, the third represents faith and grace. So, what Andreas holds to be true according to nature and reason, he teaches to be false according to grace and divine authority. Thereby emerges in his books the doctrine of the "double truth." When conflict arises it is not reason but faith which prevails.[47]

But Singer has difficulties with Denomy's position because Andreas himself never distinguishes between reason and faith. When he rejects courtly love he appeals to the

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[44]Jackson, "The *De Amore*," 250.

[45]Ibid., 244.

[46]D. W. Robertson, "The Subject of the *De Amore* of Andreas Capellanus," Modern Philology 1 no. 3 (February 1953), 153.

[47]Denomy, Heresy, 44.

teachings of the Church but not to faith as opposed to reason. Furthermore, Andreas makes an effort to show that the third book does not really contradict the first two. He denies ever having recommended love in the earlier books and says that he was merely providing instructions. In the words of Singer,

> One should approach the entire *Tractatus*[48] as a work of dramatic ambivalence, as itself a dialogue between two aspects of the medieval soul, two approaches to life brilliantly elaborated and dialectically confronting one another. Andreas does not alternate between reason and faith, but rather between nature and God or the secular and the holy. Nor does this allegiance to the natural ever free itself from its dialogue with the holy.[49]

Andreas' two opposing views on love, one courtly and the other Christian, were both important and existed side by side in the twelfth century. The Christian Church did feel threatened by a love that flourished without the benefit of the Church, which elevated a woman to the ideal of perfection, and where a man was ennobled simply by loving and serving her. But such was the new ideal of love which inspired the troubadours.

Less important, perhaps, than the issues addressed above, is the aspect of courtesy in courtly love. Seen against present day behaviour, it is, nevertheless, instructive. Benton argues that,

> Courtesy was created by men for their own satisfaction, and it emphasized a woman's role as an object, sexual or otherwise. Since they did not encourage a genuine respect for women as individuals, the conventions of medieval chivalry, . . did not advance women toward legal or social emancipation. When men ignored

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[48]The Latin, and original title, of Andreas' book.

[49]Singer, Nature, 2, 61.

chivalry, women were better off.[50]

In the final sentence, Benton seems to argue that first chivalry was ignored and then women were better off. I would suggest that it was the other way around. With the emancipation of women well under way in the twentieth century, women have made gains both legally and socially and, for these reasons, some women feel that men's courtesy towards them is no longer appropriate behaviour. Consequently courtesy has largely been disbanded. At the same time we have also lost some of the charm of yesteryear. A Maurice Chevalier[51] is an unlikely figure in today's world. A general lack of courtesy is common in daily life and in society as a whole. It raises the question whether we now quietly accept a coarseness reminiscent of the twelfth century, but admittedly not generally as grave, and which courtly rules sought to counteract? Good manners and small attentions will always bring pleasure. What newly "emancipated" women object to is not courtesy but courtesy directed just toward one sex. A redefinition of courtesy for the benefit of both sexes would make the world a gentler, softer place to be.

Tristan

We turn now to the remaining example of courtly love in this chapter, the story about Tristan and Isolde. *Tristan* is a Celtic folk legend. It was well known in the twelfth century. The earliest versions of the story were written by Béroul, Eilhart, Thomas and

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[50]Benton, "Clio," 35.

[51]French actor in the first part of the twentieth century who was well known for his courteous attitude towards women.

Gottfried von Strassburg. All of them preserved the major elements of the story but accentuated different aspects. I have chosen Gottfried's version because it emphasizes the psychological experience of love. Gottfried wrote *Tristan* around 1210 and left it unfinished.

The story reveals that Tristan's father died before he was born and his mother died at his birth. Tristan was adopted by King Mark of Cornwall, a brother of his mother, who immediately declared that the boy should be his heir. But Tristan's success as a young knight caused the envy of the others at court. They conspired to convince the king that he should marry and produce his own child and heir. As a result, King Mark rescinded on his promise to Tristan and sent him to Ireland to fetch the King of Ireland's daughter, Isolde the Fair, for his bride and escort her back to Cornwall.

On his arrival in Ireland, Tristan learns that the king has promised his daughter in marriage to the knight who slays the dragon that has ravaged his land. Tristan is the only knight with the skill and prowess to carry out the deed. When he kills the dragon, he alone has earned the right to marry Isolde and both are presented to the court of Ireland:

> The girl glided forward . . . exquisitely formed in every part, tall, well-moulded, and slender, and shaped in her attire as if Love had formed her to be her own falcon, an ultimate unsurpassable perfection . . . . This joy-giving Sun shed its radiance everywhere, gladdening the hall and its people, as softly she paced beside her mother (185,186).[52]

And Tristan:

> Was marvellously blessed with every grace that goes to make a knight: everything that makes for knightly distinction was excellent in him. His figure and attire went

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[52]All page numbers located within the text in the context of Tristan, refer to Gottfried's Tristan.

> in delightful harmony to make a picture of chivalrous manhood. . . . His bearing was fine and princely, his whole array was splendid, his person most distinguished in every particular (187, 188).

Tristan, however, did not win Isolde for himself but for King Mark. On the boat that carries them to Cornwall they drink a love potion by mistake and fall passionately in love with each other. They had already been in love although they did not know it. Now the love potion unites them in physical passion, "They who were two and divided now became one and united" (195). In Béroul's version the effect of the love potion is limited to three years,[53] while Gottfried writes that, "it will endure forever" (282). From the moment the potion takes effect, the lives of both Tristan and Isolde are controlled by love. Tristan is henceforth caught between his love for Isolde and his loyalty to Mark:

> Honour and loyalty harassed him powerfully, but love harassed him more. . . . He took his heart and soul and searched them for some change: but there was nothing there but love--and Isolde (195).

And Isolde is caught between love for Tristan and sexual modesty,

> Whatever Isolde thought, whatever came uppermost in her mind, there was nothing there, of one sort or another, but love, and Tristan. . . . Modesty chased her eyes away, love drew her heart towards him. . . . That warring company . . ., love and modesty, brought her into great confusion . . . . Thus Isolde gave up her struggle and accepted the situation. Without further delay the vanquished girl resigned herself body and soul to Love and to the man (196).

Tristan and Isolde love each other equally and both give themselves freely to love "without false shame or deceit,"

> For lovers who hide their feelings, having once revealed them, who set a watch on their modesty and so turn strangers in love, are robbers of themselves . . . . This pair did not play the prude: they were free and familiar with looks and speech (204).

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[53]De Rougemont, Love, 27.

When they arrive in Cornwall, Tristan, who is bound by laws of chivalry, surrenders Isolde to Mark, for, as Gottfried remarks, "Whatever our commitment to love, we must never lose sight of honour" (206).

Forced to separate, their passion for each other grows stronger. They meet secretly. Rumours at court arouse Mark's suspicions. Courtiers form plots to trap the lovers, but in the main they are not successful. The lovers overcome obstacles only to succumb to them again. This pattern is repeated over and over again. Tristan and Isolde willingly accept the pain and suffering love inflicts on them and they will do anything to protect their love. Isolde will lie, betray, attempt murder and even deceive God, while Tristan will betray his uncle and commit every possible dishonesty to get his way. But Gottfried never condemns them. As long as Tristan and Isolde are faithful to each other and to love, they are glorified and their actions are justified.

Mark decides to test Isolde's honour before witnesses. According to ancient customs, she must hold a bar of fiery metal. If she is not burned, God has testified to her innocence. Faced with this ordeal, Isolde phrases the oath she must take with such cunning that she does not, in fact, lie directly although, as far as the real issues are concerned, she is not truthful. Thus, "She was saved by her guile and by her doctored oath that went flying up to God with the result that she redeemed her honour." (248).

The lovers are separated but find each other again. Finally, Mark gives up and the lovers are banished from court, "Go the two of you, with God's protection. Live and love as you please."(259).

After two days in the wilderness, they arrive at a mountainous cave formed like a

cathedral and filled with recognizable images and symbols from religious literature (264-265). In the middle of the cave is a bed made of white crystal: "Love should be of crystal--transparent and translucent" (264). The cave itself is surrounded by nature most beautiful.

> Calander/larks and nightingales began to blend their voices and salute their fellow denizens, Tristan and Isolde. They greeted them warmly . . . . The cool spring received them, leaping to greet their eyes with its beauty, and sounding in their ears with even greater beauty, as it came whispering towards them to receive them with its murmur . . . . The lime/trees welcomed them, too, with fragrant breezes; they gladdened them outside and in, in their ears and in their senses. The trees in all their blossom, the lustrous meadow, the flowers, the green, green grass, and everything in bloom all smiled its welcome! On either hand, the dew, too, gave them a tender greeting, cooling their feet and solacing their hearts (270).

Beyond there is only wasteland. In this cave, isolated from society, Tristan and Isolde can love each other undisturbed and, "They fed in their grotto on nothing but love and desire" (262).

> What better food could they have for body or soul? Man was there with woman, woman there with man. What else should they be needing? They had what they were meant to have, they had reached their goal of desire (263).

Meanwhile, the king mourned the loss of his wife and his honour. One day when he rode out hunting he happened to arrive in the selfsame forest where Tristan and Isolde were hiding. They heard the noise and were much afraid that their presence would be revealed. When they went to bed that night they lay far apart "not like a man and a woman" and Tristan placed his sword between them (270). The king discovered their hideout, and seeing Tristan and Isolde apart from each other, he became convinced of their innocence and called Isolde back to his castle. Both Tristan and Isolde surrendered willingly for the sake of their honour: "They were happy far more for the sake of God and their place in society than for any other reason" (274). As Joan M. Ferrante points out,

their love could not continue in a perfect state without honour, and the adulterous nature of the affair taints their honour.[54]

Separated again, "Desire now tormented them in earnest with its witchery, many times worse than before" (276). Tristan escapes to Normandy, where he pines away thinking only of Isolde the Fair. Eventually he agrees to marry Isolde of the White Hands although he loves no one but Isolde the Fair. Gottfried's text ends abruptly just before Tristan's marriage. Other writers have the complete story. From them we learn that death is the only release from love. Tristan dies from a poisonous wound, a symbol of their love, and Isolde the Fair who has arrived in Normandy to save his life instead dies with him. The passionate love which united them in life now united them in death. And so ends the story about Tristan and Isolde.

Tristan breaks new ground in its description of human beings and their love of each other and introduces a new and refreshing view of nature. I have quoted in full the description of Tristan and Isolde's presentation to the court of Ireland, because it glorifies the physical attributes of both and signals a new appreciation of physical beauty, a fresh attitude towards human beings as whole and undivided beings. This perception defies the dualistic view of humans promoted first by Plato and later by the Christian Church and which has dominated throughout the history of the Western world. The descriptions clearly show that Tristan and Isolde not only are splendid individuals, but that they are

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[54]Joan M. Ferrante, The Conflict of Love and Honour. The Medieval Tristan Legend in France, Germany and Italy (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1973), 41.

equals in every respect. This, too, is new in a world which was male dominated from the beginning of time.

Their love for each other is authentic love. Although they become aware of their feelings only as a result of a magic potion, they were already in love before. Their love unites them body and soul. Like Aristophanes' beings in Plato's *Symposium* who were halves of an original whole, Tristan and Isolde were each other's half. Together they became one. They needed nothing else but each other for their happiness and their love becomes an almost religious experience. Singer argues that

> Gottfried's religion of love consists in his attestation of the sacred goodness that binds his archetypal heroes to one another. Their relationship is physical--overtly and magnificently sexual--but also moral, artistic, and spiritual within its own dimensions. Its sanctity derives from living in accordance with nature and in total freedom: "They did just as their hearts prompted them" [267].[55]

They both express their love spontaneously and naturally and both are greeted warmly and supported by nature as a part of nature. The description of human beings as part of the natural world indicates a shift in thinking away from Christian beliefs which renounce the world. From the Christian perspective, humans are children of God. Their real home, therefore, is in God's world, above and away from the earth. The new way of thinking of human beings as part of the natural world at last recognizes the value and beauty of the human world. As Gottfried describes it, an earthly paradise.

Ferrante explains that the problem in *Tristan* arises,

> Because Tristan's love for [Isolde] is not just an ennobling inspiration, it is also a physical passion that demands fulfilment and destroys prudence. Love, which should guide the knight in the right direction, instead gets in his way. This presents

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[55]Singer, Nature, 2, 106.

> a crucial paradox: without honour in the world a man cannot be a perfect lover, but without love a man is not a complete knight.[56]

The dilemma arises because love between man and woman cannot be a purely spiritual phenomenon. The danger that the physical passion will assert itself and take control is always present. In spite of all its ennobling powers, love then becomes an antisocial force. The only way out of the dilemma, therefore, is death.[57]

De Rougemont argues that Tristan and Isolde need their despair. With the prowess of a very brave knight, no material obstacle could prevent Tristan from marrying Isolde. And yet, he does not carry her off. De Rougemont suggests that one conclusion might be that Tristan and Isolde in fact do not love each other, "What they love is love and being in love."[58]

The sword represents prowess but Tristan uses it against himself. For this reason he can no longer overcome the most serious obstruction, which is also the one that is best suited to intensify passion. De Rougemont argues that the spontaneous intensity of a love "crowned and not thwarted" is basically of short duration. What remains is the imprint and this is what the lovers want to prolong and indefinitely renew. This is why they continue to invite new dangers.

Self-imposed chastity is symbolic suicide. Chastity purifies desire of the "spontaneous, brutish and active components still burdening it." Thus "passion" triumphs

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[56]Ferrante, The Conflict, 12.

[57]Ibid., 12.

[58]De Rougemont, Love, 41.

over desire and death triumphs over life. However, this death is for love and the obstruction, therefore, is no longer serving relentless passion but has become its goal. Thus, the love of love has hidden a far more dreadful passion, a secret desire for death and the passionate love that Tristan and Isolde share, therefore, is in reality a desire for death.[59]

But I disagree with de Rougemont's conclusion. In deference to the teachings of the Church, Tristan and Isolde had to die. Human lovers simply could not be allowed to get away with passionate love for each other; their story could not have a happy ending. That would be a betrayal of the Church since passionate love is reserved for God. Thus, by their death God claims his rightful prize.

Summary

In this chapter I have attempted to show that courtly love reflects not only one perspective on love but "a whole spectrum of attitudes,"[60] and only a very broad definition of the term can accommodate its many different expressions: love as practised in the courts of Europe in the twelfth century. As such it applied only to a small segment of the population. Courtly love focused on the individual, on individual experience and commitment and freedom of choice in matters of love. Moreover, for the first time in Western Christian history, human sexual love was celebrated as a value in itself.

Fin' amors expressed male fantasy in a male oriented world and established a fealty

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[59]Ibid., 45.

[60]Valency, In Praise, 143.

that was independent of legal marriage and Christian beliefs. The only basis was love of a lady who served as an incentive for knightly perfection. Andreas Capellanus instructed in the art of love and voiced the concern of the medieval soul when he discussed human love over and against the teachings of the Church. According to Moore,

> The problem was to find a balance among the different kinds of love. . . . The limitations of human nature required man to choose among or to balance all [his] needs and obligations, to accept the tension among them, to try to maintain some kind of equilibrium, and to live with the inadequacy of his efforts.[61]

Moore points out that no one managed this in his own life.[62] Finally, *Tristan* pointed to the importance of individual choice in the creation of authentic love between a man and woman and showed how adulterous love can lead to conflicting loyalties and obligations and upset the social order. The story betrays a fascination with the early stages of love, when idealization is most powerful. It is difficult to imagine Tristan and Isolde as a married couple. Continuous passion eventually exhausts itself and if the love relationship is going to last, it must change.

With reference to the many poets of the twelfth century, Moore writes,

> They had achieved new insights into the appropriate unifying relationship between man and woman, but their searching stopped at the end of the poem. So they had nothing to say about how the relationship between man and woman changes over extended time, how it is modified by the birth of children, how individual characteristics, so deeply rooted as to be immovable, persevere to the end as sources of consolation and irritation to the other, and how the process of revelation and discovery leads to the growth and psychic intertwining of two imperfect personalities. In brief, the poets did not discover conjugal love . . . . But

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[61]Moore, Love, 152.

[62]Ibid., 153.

then, neither did anyone else.[63]

From its early beginnings in troubadour lyrics in Provence in Southern France, courtly love spread to Northern France and the rest of Europe, including Germany, Italy, Spain and England. For the next seven hundred years and up to the present day, it set the tone and pattern for poetry and literature in the Western world. The love that was practised by the aristocracy in the twelfth century became available to the common person and gave rise to the concept of romantic love, which is the topic of the next chapter.

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[63]Ibid., 148.

CHAPTER 6

ROMANTIC LOVE

Western history remembers many legends and stories about romantic lovers: Anthony and Cleopatra, Romeo and Juliet, Dido and Aeneas, to name a few. They testify to the timeless quality of romantic love. But the concept can also be traced to a particular time and place: the age of romanticism in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe. Romanticism emphasized the importance of the individual and personal feelings. It celebrated everything emotional, creative and imaginative and viewed sexual love as a natural expression of human nature.[1] The age of romanticism is the cradle of romantic love in the twentieth century where it dominates all other concepts of love.

Although the twelfth century had its own version of romantic love, it was practised in the courts of Europe and as such it was limited to the aristocracy. Romantic love had to await a number of social changes before it became available to a broad population. Thus, literacy slowly became more widely spread and poetry and romances became readily accessible. Both are credited with the dispersion of romantic ideals:

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[1]See Lilian R. Furst, Romanticism (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.), 1969. Also, by the same author, Romanticism in Perspective. A Comparative Study of Aspects of the Romantic Movements in England, France and Germany (New York: MacMillan), 1969, and The Contours of European Romanticism (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd.), 1979.

> Books opened the door to an aviary filled with flights of the imagination, winged fantasies of love; they gave readers a sense of emotional community. Somewhere in another city or state another soul was reading the same words, perhaps dreaming the same dream.[2]

Especially during the latter part of the nineteenth century, industrialism gave many unmarried women the opportunity to earn money away from the home, be self-sufficient and thus to expand their world. They slowly became persons in their own right to a greater degree than in the past. This trend continued in the twentieth century when women won the right to own property. Divorce was increasingly possible and higher education became available to them for the first time in history. These and many other changes eventually gave impetus to women's social and legal independence and facilitated romantic love in the general population.

In this chapter I will deal with romantic love in the twentieth century. Although my focus is on heterosexual love, for the most part, the arguments I present can apply equally well to homosexual love. Like all love, the nature of romantic love changes through stages and phases. I will examine these in turn and look at love and marriage through history and today. Finally I will present comments and critiques of romantic love from a female perspective and briefly touch on the relationship between love and death which has fascinated critics. But first I will address the important question of why we fall in love in the first place.

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[2]Diane Ackerman, The History of Love (New York: Random House, 1994), 91.

Why We Fall in Love

From a psychological perspective, Steven Friedlander and Delmont C. Morrison argue that falling in love is based on "an internal need state that is frustrated in its effort to gain satisfaction"[3] while Francesco Alberoni is more specific when he holds that falling in love arises from a state of deep depression and an inability to find something that has value in life.[4] Falling in love is often precipitated by feelings of emptiness and loneliness and, "Only when we are loved and can give love in return do we feel whole. We are incomplete beings without love, and we yearn to be connected."[5]

From the perspective of biology, Ross Rizley maintains that falling in love is biologically preset and predetermined. It serves to increase the closeness and therefore the possibility that two unrelated individuals will mate.[6] Anthony Walsh agrees. He argues that love originates in the reproduction process.[7]

From an ontological perspective, Mahatma Gandhi speculates that love is an ontological power, the essence of life itself, "the dynamic reunion of that which was

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[3]Steven Friedlander and Delmont C. Morrison, "Childhood," in On Love and Loving, eds. Kenneth S. Pope and Associates (San Francisco, Washington, London: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1980), 28.

[4]Francesco Alberoni, Falling in Love, trans. Lawrence Venuti (New York: Random House, 1983), 69.

[5]Walsh, Science, 15.

[6]Ross Rizley, "Psychobiological Bases of Romantic Love," in On Love, eds. Pope et al., 104.

[7]Walsh, Science, 23.

separated."[8] This line of thinking is shared by Arthur Schopenhauer[9] who, not unlike Walsh above, contends that love is rooted in the sexual impulse. The purpose of a love affair is to produce the next generation. To this end, the will of the individual serves the will of the species. So, what appears as sexual impulse is merely the will to live. The sexual impulse knows how to assume the guise of objective admiration in order to deceive our consciousness. This tactic is necessary for nature to fulfil its objective. Therefore, when we fall in love, the most important thing is not that love is returned, but the act of sexual union. Everyone desires the most beautiful person, whom Schopenhauer identifies as the person "in whom the character of the species is most purely impressed" and furthermore, "Each individual will especially regard as beautiful in another individual those perfections which he himself lacks, nay, even those which are opposite to his own."[10] Schopenhauer concludes that,

> The delusive ecstasy which seizes a man at the sight of a woman whose beauty is suited to him, and pictures to him a union with her as the highest good, is just the *sense of the species*, which, recognizing the distinctly expressed stamp of the same, desires to perpetuate it with this individual.[11]

While pondering the arguments advanced by psychology, biology and ontology above, it seems reasonable to argue that none of them can claim to hold the magic wand

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[8]Mahatma Gandhi, Self-Restraint Versus Self-Indulgence (Ahmedabad, 1928), 102, quoted in Walsh, Science, 24.

[9]1780-1860.

[10]Arthur Schopenhauer, "Love as Illusion," in Philosophies, eds. Norton and Kille, 84.

[11]Schopenhauer, "Love," 84.

alone and by themselves. Instead, falling in love is a complex experience that involves the whole person: heart, soul, mind and body and perhaps the sense of the species as well. In any case, when we are in the throes of a passionate love affair we care little about hypotheses however interesting they may be to those who study these matters.

The Early Stage of Romantic Love

The early stage of romantic love is perhaps best described as a passionate, sexual love which glorifies the merging of two lovers. I call this stage "passionate love." It includes ideas which have emerged from the past, i.e., the incompleteness of human beings and their endless search for wholeness. Like the beings in Aristophanes' myth[12] but unlike courtly lovers who were antecedently perfect, the ideal of romantic love suggests that merging with each other makes the romantic lovers perfect and whole. All our inadequacies, all our worries and doubts about ourselves, all our feelings of loneliness and emptiness will disappear if we but find the one who alone can fulfill all our needs and wants. Together we are one and each of us can make up for what the other is missing. This is our romantic hope and expectation. It is also our illusion, as we shall see.

Passionate love is closely identified with love at first sight and falling in love. Love at first sight is associated with a feeling of instant recognition which very well could be based on what John Money calls a "love map" which we develop as we grow up, usually between the ages of five and eight. It determines what excites us sexually and induces us to fall in love:

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[12]See CHAPTER 2, EROS IN PLATO'S *SYMPOSIUM*.

> As a child you get used to the turmoil or tranquillity in your house, the way your mother listens, scolds, and pats you and how your father jokes or walks or smells. Certain temperamental features of your friends and relatives strike you as appealing; others you associate with disturbing incidents. And gradually these memories begin to take on a pattern in your mind, a subliminal template for what turns you off, what turns you on.[13]

Love at first sight hits without warning. It usually happens between two people who up to that moment have been complete strangers and who become totally intimate in a very short time. This, according to Rizley, attests to "the powerful biological and evolutionary basis for romantic love."[14]

We cannot decide to fall in love and we cannot decide to fall out of love. It simply happens to us. Dorothy Tennov argues that we fall in love when we are ready[15] and José Ortega y Gasset, because we want to.[16] If we are already in a committed love relationship we are less likely to fall in love. On the other hand, we can fall in and out of love very quickly and throughout our lifetime, and we do not fall in love with just anyone.

Falling in love is a euphoric state that lifts the lovers above the trivialities of everyday life and gives them a feeling of transcendence, of mystery and awe. Walsh

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[13]Helen Fisher, referring to John Money, Love maps: Clinical Concepts of Sexual/Erotic Health and Pathology, Paraphilia, and Gender Transposition in Childhood, Adolescence and Maturity (New York, Irvington Publishers, 1986) in Helen Fisher, Anatomy of Love. A Natural History of Mating, Marriage, and Why We Stray (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1992), 44-45.

[14]Rizley, "Psychobiological," 104.

[15]Dorothy Tennov, Love and Limerence: The Experience of Being in Love (New York: Stein and Day, 1979) quoted by Helen Fisher, "The Nature and Evolution of Romantic Love," in Romantic Passion. A Universal Experience?, ed. William Jankowiak (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 27.

[16]José Ortega y Gasset, "Falling in Love," in Philosophies, eds. Norton and Kille, 20.

explains,

> It is perhaps the strongest of all emotions experienced by human beings; at the very least, it is the strongest of all positive emotions. When it strikes us, we become *different* people. Our perceptions are drastically altered, the world revolves around the loved one, and little else besides him or her seems to matter very much. If love is returned, the world seems to be a finer place, we smile at strangers, we search for superlatives to describe the beloved.[17]

When we are in love, we feel more alert and more active, and the need for sleep is decreased. The heart beats a little faster and there is a strong desire for closeness and sexual union: "To love is to enjoy seeing, touching with all the senses, as closely as possible, a lovable object which loves in return."[18] The power of the experience is well expressed by this respondent to Shere Hite's study, *Women and Love:*

> Every time I see him my heart fills with joy. His face refreshes me, rejuvenates my spirit, my soul. He fills all my needs, intellectually, emotionally, spiritually and physically. He is the one and only person I have ever been passionate about or with.[19]

The beloved is always near in thought. We dream a lot, by day or when we are asleep. It seems at times as if the beloved takes over most of the function of the mind. All the while the imagination creates untold perfections in the beloved. Often these are only perceived by the lover while others may shake their heads and mumble, "I wonder what they see in each other." Stendhal[20] compares the idealization of the beloved to a leafless branch

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[17]Walsh, Science, 187.

[18]Marie Henri Beyle, known as Stendhal, Love, trans. Gilbert and Suzanne Sale (London: The Merlin Press, 1957; Penguin Books, 1975), 45.

[19]Respondent in Shere Hite, The Hite Report. Women and Love. A Cultural Revolution in Progress (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1987), 490.

[20]Stendhal, Love, 45.

thrown into an abandoned salt mine. When retrieved two or three months later it is covered with brilliant crystals, "Even the smallest twig, no bigger than a tom-tit's claw, is studded with a galaxy of scintillating diamonds."[21] The original branch is no longer recognizable. Nor is plain Jane or John when enhanced in the lover's imagination.

While we are excited and enjoy being in love, it is also a period of great vulnerability which can be all too overwhelming, as this woman said, "I do not like being in love. I feel too vulnerable . . . . I would rather be with someone I feel comfortable and safe with than to be in love."[22] Passionate lovers hope fervently that the relationship will continue. But hope is mixed with fear that it will not last. Feelings of vulnerability mixed with a heightened state of alertness contribute to an increased sensitivity to the quality of communication between the lovers. The "wrong" words can throw them into deep despair while the "right" words are repeated in the mind over and over again, often the source of delirious happiness.

Passionate love has nothing to do with social order and often violates morality. In its early stages it is nearly irreversible despite social, political or economic pressures on the lovers to end the relationship. It is a narcissistic love and as such it is very unstable. Perhaps well that it should be, passionate love is of limited duration. Tennov found that, "The most frequent interval, as well as the average, is between approximately eighteen months and three years"[23] and Money concludes that once lovers see each other on a

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[21]Ibid., 45.

[22]Respondent in Hite, The Hite Report, 492.

[23]Tennov, in Fisher, Anatomy, 57.

regular basis, the passion typically only lasts two to three years.[24]

Love and Marriage: A Historical Perspective

Passionate love is not a love that nurtures marriage. Glorious as it is, we do not, we do not wish to, acknowledge the instability of this love. "And they lived happily ever after," is where most fairytales end. But the divorce statistics belie this ending. It is difficult to think of a basis for marriage that is more unsuitable than passionate love

It has existed in uneasy relationship to marriage throughout the history of the Western world. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries marriage was arranged by parents on the basis of political and economic considerations. Passionate love and marriage were considered incompatible. As Lawrence Stone points out, "Every advice book, every medical treatise, every sermon and religious homily . . . firmly rejected both romantic passion and lust as suitable bases for marriage."[25] In the eighteenth century, marriage based on mutual affection and a long period of courtship was gaining in acceptance. The dramatic falling in love was frowned upon as a mild case of insanity and parent would do anything to prevent the lovers from getting married.

Nineteenth century Victorian marriages idealized family life and conjugal affection. They were patriarchal and usually sombre affairs characterized by sexual restraint and little emotional openness between the partners:

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[24]Money, in Fisher, Anatomy, 57.

[25]Lawrence Stone, "Passionate Attachments in the West in Historical Perspective," in Passionate Attachments. Thinking About Love, eds. Willard Gaylin and Ethel Person (New York: The Free Press, 1988; Paperback Edition, 1989), 17

> It was the Victorians . . . who dressed women in the fashion equivalent of a straightjacket and hushed up lovers' sighs. Their fiction of "the happy family," where Father rules and a grateful mother is the lady of the house, was a social ideal picked up later by the film industry and handed whole to the twentieth century.[26]

To love one another was a social duty and respectability was a key value of the age. At the same time, the institution of marriage was valued highly as one of the pillars supporting social stability. But eventually, with the widespread availability of the romantic novel, falling passionately in love came to be considered both normal and praiseworthy.[27] An arranged marriage, then, was thought to be intolerable. However, it was not until the twentieth century that romantic love between a man and a woman became the acceptable and usually the only ground for marriage.

But if love in marriage is going to last, it must change. In the words of a respondent to Hite's research, "Intense, erotic love is temporary--loving is attachment, commitment and respect."[28] The fantasies that nourished the romantic passion must be recognized as illusion and lovers must begin to see and appreciate each other as they actually are and not on the basis of the many imagined ideas they have fostered about each other. At this stage, some may try to force the other to become what they thought the loved one was or expected the other to become. This is a critical time which may or may not signal the end of the relationship.

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[26]Ackerman, A Natural, 90.

[27]Stone, "Attachments," 18.

[28]Respondent in Hite, The Hite Report, 495.

Being in Love

Passionate love can also be the beginning of a more settled state, that of being in love. However, being in love does not necessarily depend on a prior state of passionate love. When we are in love, the sexual impulse is still powerful but perhaps less urgent. The lovers feel happy when they are together and a sense of loss when apart. They confide in each other more and increasingly rely on each other for emotional needs and support. Both enjoy their ongoing relationship, each gives and receives love, and gradually they deepen the bond to each other.

But the closeness they enjoy can also give rise to intense feelings of jealousy. If the other is the most important source of emotional support and fulfilment it can be devastating to lose that person. With migration and separation from the extended family, expectations and demands on the other are often increased. These can be both excessive and unreasonable, for no one can expect that just one other person should be able to fulfil all our important needs and wants. However, if the partner fails to meet our expectations, we feel unloved. But these feelings often reflect a low self-esteem which foster the belief that we are not worthy of love. Self-defeating thoughts such as these prompt the following advice from Wayne W. Dyer,

> Who are the folks who are good at loving? Are they self-demolishing in their behaviour? Never. Do they put themselves down and hide in the corner? Not so. Getting good at giving and receiving love starts at home, with you, with a vow to end any low self-esteem behaviours that have become a way of life.[29]

In this admonition, Dyer reiterates what many psychologists have said before, namely, that

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[29]Wayne W. Dyer, Your Erroneous Zones (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1976; Avon Books, 1977), 42.

all love begins with self-love.[30]

Loving

The third stage of romantic love I simply call "loving." Instead of loving on the implicit promise that the other will fulfill their needs, both partners are able to distinguish themselves and their needs from each other and realize that the needs of the other are at least as important as their own. Thus loving involves caring and concern for the other and as such it is more useful to think of "true" love as attraction plus attachment.[31]

Benjamin Schlesinger and Shirley Tenhouse Giblon conducted a study of lasting marriages that involved one-hundred-twenty-nine couples who volunteered to participate in the study in Metropolitan Toronto. They defined a lasting marriage as one that "had lasted at least fifteen years and contained at least one child." The respondents had been married an average of twenty-five years.[32] Schlesinger and Giblon used a questionnaire and interview format. Husband and wife responded to the same questionaries separately. Thus, independently of each other, they chose the following factors as being most important in a lasting marriage: love, respect, trust and communication.[33]

In fact, trying to prolong the early stage of passionate love could kill the

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[30]See CHAPTER 4, AGAPĒ.

[31]Walsh, Science, 191.

[32]Benjamin Schlesinger and Shirley Tenhouse Giblon, Lasting Marriages (Toronto: Guidance Centre, Faculty of Education, 1984), 18.

[33]Schlesinger, Lasting, 19.

relationship, according to Dr William Nagler. He surveyed more than thirty years of psychiatric literature and submitted over a thousand studies on successful and unsuccessful relationships to a computerized factor analysis. He found that satisfying long-term relationships, which I refer to as "loving," were *not* about passion: "Happy couples . . . relax and enjoy each other's company."[34] This view seems to be supported by this respondent in Hite's' study who wrote,

> After thirty years of marriage, I think we know everything we can about each other, positive and negative, and we stay together, do things together, enjoy some things separately, we are secure together. I was jealous for years until I figured out it was my own insecurity and that he wasn't going anywhere, or at least not very far away.[35]

In the mid sixties two models which promote and support long term relations were advanced. Francesca M. Cancian reports that both are based on the notions that:

> First . . . both partners are expected to develop a fulfilled and independent self, instead of sacrificing themselves for the other person. Second, family and gender roles are flexible and are continually renegotiated. Third, the relationship centers on intimate communication of needs and feelings, and on openly confronting problems. Self-development and love are integrated in these blueprints, and love is the responsibility of the man as well as the woman.[36]

Although both models emphasize the above qualities, Cancian explains that the independence model stresses the development of an independent self, avoidance of obligations and free expression of one's needs and feelings as preconditions to love. The

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[34]William Nagler and Ann Androff, The Dirty Half Dozen. Six Radical Rules to Make Relationships Last (New York: Warner Books Inc., 1991), 6.

[35]Respondent in Hite, The Hite Report, 504.

[36]Francesca M. Cancian, Love in America. Gender and Self-development (Cambridge: University Press, 1987; repr. 1993), 39.

interdependence model, on the other hand, holds that the partners both owe each other support and affection. According to this model, love is a precondition to full self-development.[37]

Which model is better? Experts disagree. In America the independence model has become the principal model of love.[38] But, in *Habits of the Heart*, Robert Bellah and associates quote a divorce counsellor who maintains that relationships are better when the partners "do not depend just on themselves or each other."[39] Cancian's study of one-hundred-thirty-three adults indicated that the interdependence model was dominant.[40] But critics argue that "communication and emotional interdependence often seem to be overemphasized, while material interdependence is ignored, and the importance of restraining rules is overlooked."[41] A couple's interdependence also fails to link them to the larger society. Researchers generally agree that there is a growing emphasis amongst couples on "self-fulfilment, flexible roles and open communication."[42] With a harmonious balance between the two models it seems possible to meet these needs.

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[37]Cancian, Love, 40.

[38]Ibid., 40.

[39]Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler and Stephen M. Tipton, Habits of the Heart. Individualism and Commitment in American Life (New York, London: Harper & Row, 1985; Perennial Library, 1986), 101. Also quoted in Cancian, Love, 41.

[40]Cancian, Love, 41.

[41]Ibid., 150.

[42]Ibid., 41.

Independence or interdependence raises the question about the idea of merging with the beloved which is so important in romantic love. If merging means that two become one and the same then the lovers lose their distinct personalities and thus they lose what was lovable in them in the first place. This is not what we want. Each is a person in his/her own right with equal freedom and responsibilities. They share the love they have for each other, ideas that are important to both, outlook on life, love of their children as well as family love and family obligations.

Love and Marriage: The Twentieth Century

Not many societies expect as much from marriage as we do, but as marriage has evolved it has tended to be a rigid affair with little opportunity for individual freedom and potential. Often love relationships begin to die once they are legalized. Boredom, little joy, much anger and frustration result in disillusion with marriage and a search for love elsewhere.

Keeping a marriage vibrant takes work and adjustments.[43] To some extent it requires a limitation of individual behavioural freedom and, from time to time, a willingness to suffer and endure. If we are open and value creativity, aliveness, and freedom to grow emotionally and spiritually, then it is easy. But if our preference leans towards tradition and the status quo, it will be difficult at best.

In an age that values instant gratification and easy disposal of the unwanted, why

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[43]For lack of a better word, I use the term "marriage" reluctantly since the traditional "marriage" does not reflect many other forms of long term relationships which are so prevalent in the modern age and to which my remarks can apply equally well.

should we invest time and effort in long term relationships? Because marriage, in spite of all its shortcomings, is still often the best form for long term comfort, contentment and joy. Furthermore, most marriages have more going for them than we are willing to give them credit for: the memories, the shared joys, the hopes and the dreams we had, even the rough times which we somehow overcame.

In some instances, both marriage partners are in pursuit of professional lives which leaves little time for commitment to the family. In others, the high costs of living demand that both partners work away from the home and there simply aren't enough hours in the day to do all the things we need and want to do. Thus social and economic conditions often do not support the family. Ideally, both partners should commit themselves freely and equally to take on the responsibility of family life and balance the demands of work and family. By allowing the time to love and care for those around them they create value which they themselves may need in times of sickness and in old age.

Summary

In this chapter I have argued that romantic love is a timeless phenomenon as well as a concept confined to time and place. Researchers from different fields of expertise have suggested reasons why we fall in love. But in the final analysis it seems reasonable to argue that falling in love is a complex experience that cannot be attributed to psychology or biology or even ontology alone and by themselves. Falling in love involves the whole person: body, mind, heart and soul.

I mentioned three stages in romantic love: passionate love, being in love and

loving. One stage need not follow another and is not dependent on another. Each state can occur by itself.

The early stage, passionate love, is closely identified with falling in love and love at first sight. This is a stage dominated by the sexual impulse and merging with the other. It is associated with ecstasy, heightened vulnerability and an implicit expectation that the other will fulfill all our needs and desires. This stage is short-lived. Duration varies between a few month and three years.

Being in love is a more settled state. The sexual impulse is still very strong but the lovers increasingly support, confide in each other and enjoy the growing bond between them. In the third state, loving, the partners are able to separate their personal needs and wants from the relationship while those of the other become at least as important as their own. This stage involves care and concern for the other and commitment to the relationship.

Passionate love and marriage has had a long history of uneasy relationship. Mostly, in the West, passionate love has been deemed unsuitable as a basis for marriage, but in the twentieth century it has become the main and usually the only reason to marry. But if marriage is to last love must change. Two models for successful marriages have been proposed. In both, the couple share the love they have for each other. But the independence model emphasizes love based on the development of an independent self, while the interdependence model favours individual development through mutual support and affection. Critics argue as to which one is best. Perhaps it is a personal question of finding a harmonious balance between the two.

Feminist Critique of Romantic Love

Criticism of romantic love has been voiced especially by women who generally argue that true love cannot exist as long as the male is favoured in society. I tend to agree with this position. I have chosen Simone de Beauvoir's moderate voice to represent this female perspective.

De Beauvoir argues that love does not have the same meaning for men and women. She describes what I take to be a typical woman in love *in the first part of this century*, contrasts this with a man's love and suggests a basis for authentic, loving relationships.

De Beauvoir explains that a woman loves unconditionally and totally. For her, happiness in love means to be acknowledged as part of a man, or, as she says, "a god."[44] "So long as she is in love and is loved by and necessary to her loved one, she feels herself wholly justified: she knows peace and happiness."[45] But attached to a man, the woman must forever resign herself to second place.

The man wants unconditional love from a woman. She must give up everything for him. But he only appreciates her as one value amongst many and she must fit into his scheme of things. De Beauvoir argues that it is the dissimilarity in their situations that is responsible for the difference in male and female conceptions of love:

> The individual who is a subject, who is himself, if he has the courageous inclination toward transcendence, endeavours to extend his grasp on the world: he is

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[44]Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., Vintage Books Edition, September 1989), 643.

[45]De Beauvoir, 653.

> ambitious, he acts. But an inessential creature is incapable of sensing the absolute at the heart of her subjectivity; a being doomed to immanence cannot find self-realization in acts. Shut up in the sphere of the relative, destined to the male from childhood, habituated to seeing in him a superb being whom she cannot possibly equal, the woman who has not repressed her claim to humanity will dream of transcending her being toward one of these superior beings, of amalgamating herself with the sovereign subject.[46]

For a woman, love becomes a religion. She will exalt the man as ultimate value and reality and will humble herself to worthlessness before him in the hope of transcending her own being towards one of these man gods. Even if she could choose independence, loving a man in the manner described seems the most appealing to the majority of women, for, as de Beauvoir argues, it is painful to take responsibility for one's own life.[47] Love is most sublime when a woman can merge her identify with that of the loved one, just as it is in mystical love:

> The woman in love tries to see with his eyes; she reads the books he reads, prefers the pictures and the music he prefers; she is interested only in the landscapes she sees with him, in the ideas that come from him; she adopts his friendships, his enmities, his opinions; when she questions herself, it is his reply she tries to hear; she wants to have in her lungs the air he has already breathed; the fruits and flowers that do not come from his hands have no taste and no fragrance.[48]

But her happiness seldom lasts for no man is god and that fact is the cause of much agony in a woman's life. A man does not need the unconditional love he demands nor the excessive devotion which only serves to boost his pride and he will only accept unconditional love and devotion on the condition that he does not have to reciprocate.

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[46]Ibid., 643.

[47]Ibid., 644.

[48]Ibid., 653.

Nor is it true that the loved man is totally necessary for the woman, or that the woman is necessary for him, "The truth is that when a woman is engaged in an enterprise worthy of a human being, she is quite able to show herself as active, efficient, taciturn--and as ascetic--as a man."[49]

By contrast with the early twentieth century view, authentic love should accept the imperfection, the lacks and limitations of the other and not make believe that the other is a mode of salvation. Authentic love should build on the shared affirmation of "two liberties." The lovers would then perceive themselves "both as self and as other and none of them would give up transcendence, neither would be mutilated." They would give themselves to each other and together they would contribute to values and aims in the world. Thus love would be a revelation for both of them and an enrichment of the world. De Beauvoir concludes that,

> On the day it will be possible for woman to love not in her weakness but in her strength, not to escape herself but to find herself, not to abase herself but to assert herself--on that day love will become for her, as for man, a source of life and not of mortal danger.[50]

I have a great deal of sympathy for the views of de Beauvoir. It is important , freedom and rights equal to those of men and that they are equal partners in the love relationship. De Beauvoir, a French writer and companion of Jean-Paul Sartre, has argued that this is not only possible but that the world will be a better place for it.

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[49]Ibid., 604.

[50]Ibid., 669.

Love and Death?

If we return once more to the many love stories recorded in history, one thing they have in common is death: Anthony and Cleopatra, Dido, Tristan and Isolde, Romeo and Juliet all die. This fact has prompted commentators on romantic love to argue that love and death are somehow related, that passionate love is a secret desire for death.[51] But Kenneth S. Pope argues that the experience of death is distinct from the concept of love itself. He warns about confusing the unhappy endings of love stories with the process of love and what the stories show about this process. He holds that the love stories do not seek to convey a desire for death but "the solemn, demanding, transforming process of the unrestrained involvement of two people in each other." Pope continues, "If tragedy arouses us to feel pity or fear as we watch a human being intimately come to know his or her fate, love stories can arouse similar feelings as we watch a human being intimately come to know another human being."[52] I agree with Pope's view. The love stories remembered in history are all magnificent, dramatic and outstanding. Their beauty touches us deeply, helps us get in touch with our own deep feelings and lifts us above the banalities of everyday life. Many of the love stories end tragically but perhaps the reason is that happy love is not remembered as well as the love that sears us and tears us apart.

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[51]This point was argued in the previous chapter as well. See de Rougemont, Love, 51.

[52]Kenneth S. Pope, "Defining and Studying Romantic Love," in On Love and Loving, eds. Pope et al., 1-26.

Conclusion

Romantic love is a wonderful experience but we must understand its nature, be aware of its limits and limitations. We must refuse to be carried away by romantic fantasies, refuse to build marriage on unstable love. Divorce statistics clearly indicate that problems can and often do arise if we don't. Therefore, a great deal of personal misery could be avoided if we understood the true nature of this love and acted on the knowledge we have gained to effect positive change in our lives and in our intimate relationships.

CHAPTER 7

OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS: TOWARD HOLISTIC LOVE

In response to the research question, "What is love?" I have examined selected concepts of love in the Western world from early mythology to the present day. In this chapter I will present an overview of my findings and some conclusions based on these findings. In addition I will outline a different concept of love which I call holistic love.

Overview

The earliest concept of love in the Western world came to expression in the mythological age. Eros, love, was believed to be a universal principle of life, the very life force of the universe. As such it was inclusive of all life. Later, in the Olympian age, Eros became the god of human, sexual love. This concept has reverberated through Western history right up to the present day whereas the original conception of love as a vital life force has largely been forgotten.

In Plato's time, human love was pederasty, older men loving young boys. But Plato's ideas about love extend far beyond human relations. In *The Symposium* he sets up two arguments about love. In the first, through the voice of Aristophanes, he argues on

the basis of an ancient myth that love is the search for the one and only person who can make us whole. United with the other we will be happy forever.

This argument, however, is superseded in the dialogue between Socrates and Diotima where Plato suggests that love is desire for union with the highest form of love, eternal forms of perfect goodness and beauty, located in a realm beyond the human world. In order to reach his goal the lover must progress in small steps which gradually move him further away from all human loves and all attachments to the world. Only the philosopher is capable of reaching the highest forms of love. In union with perfect goodness and beauty, the philosopher, too, becomes perfect while his sexual nature is sublimated. Plato's ideal love is an intellectual love, devoid of feelings and emotions and relations to the human world of living things.

In both arguments Plato argues for a goal of desire when all yearning and longing cease. In the first argument the goal is a state of wholeness, while in the second it is perfection. Both refer to ideal states because neither eternal wholeness nor total perfection are possible in human life. However, some will argue that Plato is concerned that humans should learn to desire only that which is truly valuable. To Plato this is the eternal, perfect forms beyond the human world. This idea accommodates human Eros by positing an impossible goal and thus it motivates continuous striving.

Plato's conception of love is dualistic in that it favours the mind over the body; an imaginary world over the natural world. It is also exclusive and hierarchical. Only the philosopher can reach the highest goal of love and in his pursuit of love he dismisses all loves on a lower level in favour of higher ones. In addition to being dualistic, exclusive

and hierarchical, when Plato argues that there is only one goal of love, which is the same for everybody, his concept of love is also both narrow and limited.

The concept of nomos is an example of religious love. It originates in the myths of the Old Testament. Nomos is based on a covenant agreement with God which holds the promise that the Jews love and honour God in response to God's great love for them. In the beginning loving God meant showing gratitude by means of offerings of various kinds, but with Moses, it came to mean that the pious Jews love God with all their heart and mind and soul by total obedience to the law and submission of the human will to the will of God.

The concept of nomos is particular to the Jewish people and excludes all others. It is also hierarchical with the human will subordinated to the will of God. Furthermore, from the invention of a single male god, through Abraham, Moses and Job, nomos is male created and male inspired. Nomos continues to be an important concept of love, mostly for good but also for evil, in Jewish life.

Agapē is another example of religious love. In Christianity, love is God's nature: perfect love which transforms everything it touches and enables human beings to love.

Jesus taught the nature of agapē in the parables. They demonstrated that agapē is spontaneous, unmotivated, indifferent to objective value and bestowed freely on everyone regardless of merit. In response to God's love for them, Jesus taught his followers to love others as they love themselves.

Paul later interpreted Jesus' crucifixion and death as God's own sacrifice for the salvation of human beings. Paul preached, moreover, that all human love originates in God and is subordinated to his love. The love they give is the love instilled in them by God. In a further development, John reinterpreted the commandment to love the neighbour. Loving others, following John's interpretation, then came to mean the kind of love Jesus exemplified: compassionate and eventually sacrificial love. Furthermore, Paul urged Christians to be imitators of God and renounce the human world. This gave rise to a secular interpretation of agapē, i.e., compassionate, self-sacrificial love of others.

Paul adopted a dualistic view of human beings and of the world. Accordingly, the spirit is superior to the body and chastity is preferable to sexual life.

The New Testament generally reports that agapē is exclusive, reserved for those who believe. It is also hierarchical as the Christian god contains and subordinates all other loves. Furthermore, agapē, like nomos, is formulated and further developed by male thought: Jesus, the Apostles, Paul, John, the list continues through generations up to the present day. Christian love, then, is male inspired, male conceived, male created and male dominated. In the formulation of the fundamental ideas of religious love which have dominated the Western culture for almost two thousand years, a female perspective is totally absent.

Courtly love is love between human beings as practised in the courts of Europe in the twelfth century when sexual love between a man and a woman became a value in itself. Restricted to the upper class, it clearly points to a class difference in love.

There is no single definition of courtly love. The term represents many different types of love. Furthermore, love in the twelfth century is an art and a science, subject to many rules and regulations.

One type of courtly love, fin' amors, was developed by the troubadours in Southern France and patterned on fealty. The knight chose to be submissive to a lady of the aristocracy and to love her, although usually from a distance. Fin' amors worshipped the perfection in a woman and celebrated unsatisfied, ever increasing sexual desire which was ennobling. The lover who was inferior to the lady must earn her affection by constantly proving his prowess, valour and devotion. The final goal of his love was perfection. This love was usually illegitimate and secret and incompatible with marriage.

Fin' amors was primarily concerned with the love of the knight and reflected male fantasy in a male oriented world. It was also exclusive love in the sense that the knight could not love more than one lady at a time.

In *The Art of Courtly Love*, Andreas Capellanus defines love in terms of sensuous longing which arises from the unfulfilled desire for the physical possession of the beloved. In book one, Andreas praises this love, but in book three he condemns it. He argues that nothing good comes out of a love that is contrary to the will of God and that God will be favourable disposed to those who refuse this love. Andreas thus presents two opposing views of love, one courtly and the other Christian. Both were important at the time and existed side by side.

A different example of courtly love, "Tristan love," is recorded in the legend of Tristan and Isolde: a passionate, adulterous love between equals which leads to conflicting

loyalties and obligations. This love thrives on obstacles, separations and pain. Again and again a pattern of secret meetings, escape and discovery is repeated. Tristan and Isolde will endure anything to protect their love for each other and through it all their love is strengthened. Their's is a passionate all consuming love that eventually causes the death of both.

Tristan love represents another aspect of courtly love which glorifies sexual love between equals. It defies the dualistic view of human beings so prevalent in Western history and points to the importance of personal choice in authentic love.

Like courtly love, the concept of romantic love celebrates love between humans. Romantic love is both a timeless phenomenon and a concept defined in terms of time of place, an expression of Romanticism in the eighteenth century. Romantic love shares many of its traits with courtly love which was restricted to the aristocracy. Like its predecessor, romantic love is a passionate, sexual love. By the eighteenth century, social and economic changes in society made it possible for passionate love to flourish in the general population and in the twentieth century the concept of passionate, romantic love dominates in the Western mind. I described three stages of romantic love: passionate love, being in love and loving. These do not depend on, nor do they necessarily follow one another.

The first stage is closely identified with falling in love, including love at first sight and being in love. It is associated with high expectations of wholeness and completion through merging with another. These expectations are reminiscent of Aristophanes' speech

in Plato's *Symposium*[1] and reflect the belief that if we but meet the right person, i.e., the only one who can fulfill all our needs and wants, we will live happily ever after. In the imagination the lovers create all sorts of perfections in each other and their love propels the lovers into a state of ecstatic joy. But because so many hopes and dreams hinge on the relationship, it is also a time when lovers feel highly vulnerable.

The next stage, being in love, reflects a more settled state when the lovers enjoy their ongoing relationship and depend more on each other. But because of the closeness they feel for each other, this is also a time that can give rise to jealousy and fear of losing the beloved. In the third stage, loving, the lovers increasingly appreciate each other as they really are and build their relationship around love and concern for each other.

Throughout the history of the Western world, passionate love has had a difficult relationship to marriage but in the twentieth century it often became the only ground for marriage. Passionate love, however, is narcissistic and very unstable. In most cases it lasts for only a few months with a limit of three years. It is, therefore, a poor basis on which to build a lasting relationship. Research shows that most lasting relationships build on love, respect, trust and communication.

Conclusions

The overview of concepts of love in the Western world indicates that love is indeed "a many splendoured thing:"[2]

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[1]See CHAPTER 2, EROS IN PLATO'S *SYMPOSIUM*.

[2]Paul Francis Webster.

*in the mythological age: a universal life force and later, sexual love;

*in Plato: a need and desire for wholeness which is overruled by a desire for otherworldly perfection;

*in the Old Testament: nomos, obedience to the law and submission of the human will to the will of God;

*in Christianity: agapē. In its sacred form it refers to God's love for human beings: compassionate, unconditional and everlasting; in its secular form agapē means compassionate, self-sacrificial human love for others.

*in the twelfth century: courtly love. Love is an art and a science. It is also fin' amors, striving for perfection exemplified by a woman, and "Tristan love," adulterous, passionate love between equals;

*in the twentieth century: romantic love: a passionate love associated with expectations of wholeness and completion through sexual love.

In Plato, Judaism and Christianity, theorists have preached ways in which we ought, we should, we must love. They point to ideals of love worth striving for while the original concept of love as a universal life force has largely been forgotten. But concepts of love never stand by themselves. They are supported by values and beliefs, some of them particular to a certain time and place, e.g., the "art" in courtly love, and others are persistently present, carried along through succeeding generations. These include:

**dualism*: Plato's eternal realm of forms versus the human world; human beings with an inferior body versus the spirit; in Christianity, the human world versus God's world

and a concept of human beings similar to Plato's;

**exclusivity*: Plato, for example, argues that only the philosopher can reach the highest expressions of love; in Judaism, amongst all the peoples, God chose the Jewish people for his own; in Christianity, only God can love and God's love is reserved for those who believe;

**perfection:* the ultimate goal for Plato's lover; the Christian God is perfect and Christians too must be perfect like God.

**hierarchy*: Plato, Judaism and Christianity all favour a permanent, unyielding hierarchy of exclusive love.

Dualism, exclusivity, perfection and hierarchy have been promoted through Western history of love to the exclusion of other values, wholeness, for example. In the context of love, they seem unlikely companions. Love is expansive, the more love we have the more we can give, but the values associated with love through history all restrict love, one way or another. Furthermore, especially in the dominant concept of love formulated in Christianity, believers have fought or denied their sexual nature and frowned upon self-love, while spiritual love and chastity have been promoted and influenced the concept of courtly love, as we have seen.

But these very narrow conceptions of love and the values that accompany them fail in their attempts to channel the complexity of human experience and tend to negate ordinary life and the value of ordinary things.

However, if we look at the concepts of love from a humanistic perspective, we can see that they have developed, at least in part, in response to human needs and wants:

*mythological Eros represents a need and desire to know, to understand the world and to explain its mysterious forces.

*Plato: his concept of love arises from his personal desire to educate and to promote only the best for human beings. Furthermore, Plato's concept responds to a need for self-expansion through striving for perfection. This idea resurfaced in courtly love in the twelfth century. Plato dismissed striving for wholeness by uniting with another being. But the desire for wholeness reappeared as an important element in romantic love.

*nomos: this concept does not so much reflect the needs and desires of individuals as it does those of the small, fledgling Jewish tribe in antiquity. Thus nomos, with an emphasis on obedience to the law and submission of the human will serves a higher need for social order and survival of the group.

*agapē is perhaps the most appealing concept. The invention of a distant, loving god who dispenses his love unconditionally responds to a deeply felt need to be loved for no reasons at all.

One can marvel at the human imagination capable of inventing such a wide variety of loves. Perhaps the better and the more completely a concept fulfills human needs and desires, the more entrenched it becomes in the human mind and the longer it will endure. This helps to explain the long dominance of Christian beliefs.

Earlier in the chapter, I pointed to the male lineage involved in the formulation of agapē and argued that Christian love is male inspired, male conceived, male created and

male dominated.[3] Others, like Rosemary Radford Ruether,[4] have reached a similar conclusion by pointing to the images of women and marriage in the Bible.

In the Old Testament, Hosea compares the covenant between God and Israel to a marriage bond, "I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy."[5] God is a jealous husband, given to fits of anger. But he is also patient and forgiving. In addition he is powerful and free to make demands which are never questioned by reason. If Israel keeps the covenant agreement, proving her abiding love, God will bless her. But if she is unfaithful, he will punish her. Israel, continuously coming up short, is compared to the unfaithful wife, the harlot, the whore.

The marriage analogy is continued in the New Testament. Jesus is "married to the Church."[6] Jesus is the "bridegroom," the bride is the human soul. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians he exhorts wives be subject to their husbands, as they are to God, "For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church."[7] Furthermore, in the Catholic Church, marriage is a holy sacrament, a mystical union parallelled to the mystical union between Jesus and the Church.

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[3]See Marty, A Short History.

[4]Rosemary Radford Ruether, ed., Religion and Sexism. Images of Women in the Jewish and Christian Traditions (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 66.

[5]Hosea 2: 19-20. Similar ideas are expressed by Jeremiah 2: 2; 3: 1, 4, 6-10 and Ezekiel, chapter 16.

[6]Ephesians 5:25.

[7]Ibid., 5:22.

The Judaeo/Christian tradition teaches by inference that simply by reason of being born male, a man has the right to make demands and impose his will while a woman, just because she is female, must be submissive. In its use of sexist metaphors the Judaeo/Christian tradition has perpetuated a view of love and marriage which inevitably kept the wife in a subordinate position to the husband. For almost two thousand years in the West, it has extolled the virtues of the male and kept the female under foot. This skewed perspective of human beings has permeated all of Western culture. In the words of Dr. Elliott Barker, "Arbitrary male dominance is a powerful and insidious force in our society. It's still a man's world in many ways."[8] It casts a long and deep shadow on Western concepts of love. No wonder it is the cause of so much anger amongst women and especially radical feminists who agree that love must be based on equality. As long as one sex, the male, is favoured in Western culture, there can be no equality and no love.

Shulamith Firestone[9] argues from the common ground of all feminists when she asserts that the inequality of men and women is a product of politics and culture, not of nature. She holds that the very structure of culture is permeated with sexual polarity. It is being run by, for, and to the advantage of male society, and love, although good in itself, is depraved by its class context. In the following outburst she expresses her profound anger and seems to dismiss heterosexual love altogether:

Love means an entirely different thing to men than to women: it means ownership

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[8]Elliott Barker, quoted by Mark Bourrie, "Monster-proofing," Toronto Star, 9 November 1997, E2.

[9]Shulamith Firestone, The Dialectic of Sex (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1970), 142.

> and control; it means jealousy, where he never exhibited it before--when she might have wanted him to (who cares if she is broke or raped until she officially belongs to him: then he is a raging dynamo, a veritable cyclone, because his property, his ego extension have been threatened); it means a growing lack of interest, coupled with a roving eye. Who needs it?[10]

Although it is clear from the above that I share the basic premise of Firestone's argument, I personally find her views too extreme. Most women have known the type of man she describes but many of us have also known males who were loving, kind and generous. The fact that they exist is often overlooked by radical feminists who seem to have been blinded by their anger.

In the mid-twentieth century, research into the functions of the brain revealed that human beings who had the corpus callosum[11] surgically cut had two relatively normal brain hemispheres. When their functions were identified and studied it was discovered that each hemisphere had its separate mode of consciousness, distinct memory and different patterns of thinking. This research is constantly being revised and updated. At the present time it seems more accurate to talk about two distinct brain modes, the left and the right. Hierarchical thinking reflects a left brain mode while the right brain mode is holistic, interactive and horizontal.[12] Both sexes have the ability to act on the basis of the left as well as the right brain mode. However, the left brain mode is most often favoured by the

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[10]Firestone, Dialectic, 163.

[11]The nerve fibre that connects the left and right hemispheres of the brain.

[12]David A. Kolb, Experiential Learning. Experience as the Source of Learning and Development (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1984), 49.

male while a female perspective leans towards the right mode.[13] To achieve wholeness of love as well as wholeness in life, love must reflect the influence of both the left and right brain mode. But love as developed in the Western world has relied mainly on the left brain mode. One can wonder what difference it would have made if the perspective of a right brain mode had also been included.

Holistic Love

Holistic medicine and holistic education aim at the whole person: heart, soul, mind and body and not only at specific areas of particular concern. But nowhere in the Western tradition do we encounter "holistic love."

Holistic love, however, offers an alternative to the theories of love which are deeply embedded in our heritage. It reflects mainly a right brain mode: *synthetic*, "putting things together to form wholes;" *concrete*, "relating to things as they are, at the present moment;" *intuitive*, "making leaps of insights, often based on incomplete patterns, hunches, feelings, or visual images;" *holistic*, "seeing whole things all at once; perceiving the overall patterns and structures."[14] As opposed to Platonic and Christian concepts which rely on a transcendental realm for the fulfilment of love, holistic love is firmly entrenched in human life and experience. The concept relies on a field of love as opposed to a hierarchy.

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[13]See Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1982).

[14]Kolb, Experiental, 49.

Although we value both, a lifelong friendship is different from a satisfying meal when we are hungry. Holistic love is inclusive and does not permanently favour one love over all others, but the breadth of holistic love, in contrast to Platonic and Christian ideas, supports humans in their quest for wholeness and completion.

We create, develop and maintain our personal field of love in response to our needs and desires, personal dispositions and talents, individual development and life happenings. This is a field, then, of co-existing, different kinds of love which we have discovered for ourselves by searching and reaching towards selected objects in experience that bear the promise of fulfilling important needs and desires of the "whole" person: of heart, soul, mind and body, whether to give and/or to receive love. But it is never a closed field. It changes and expands (or, sadly, sometimes contracts) in response to a changing self.

The field can, but need not, include persons, all of nature, material as well as immaterial goods: ideas, interests and beliefs, and may also contain any number of the concepts of love recorded through history. By choosing and selecting our loves as we move along in life, holistic love can make life worth living and, perhaps better than anything else, indicate who we are: "Tell me what you love and I will tell you who you are," as the saying goes.[15]

All loves vary in intensity, extensiveness, depth, and duration and throughout the life cycle we tend to give priority to one or another kind of love. This gives focus, direction and therefore stability in life. But priorities can always be challenged by other

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[15]Unknown origin.

loves. Thus a priority of love-of-mind may be challenged by a love-of-person(s); a love of gourmet foods by a love of healthy living. The result is a dynamic tension between different kinds of love. Furthermore, the durability of any love is reflected in its ability to incorporate other loves and thereby to strengthen and to renew itself. We cannot hope ever to meet all our needs and desires at all times, but an expansive field of personal loves offers the promise that we can better cope with the trials and tribulations of ordinary life.

Like all love, holistic love does not stand by itself but connects to other values. Thus, if I come to love my garden, it assumes a special importance to me. I care for it more and want to spend more time in my garden. I may think of creative ways in which I may further enhance its appeal to me: plant fragrant and beautiful flowers or bushes and trees I particularly like, and I may shelter my garden from the wind and protect it from the winter's frost. As I spend time in my garden, I may dream about its splendour in summer, imagine what it is like on a winter's day, remember the happy moments I have spent there, and marvel at how much pleasure it continues to give me. In this manner, by embracing my garden creatively in many different ways, I give it a value which is over and above any value that it may have in and by itself. This extra value comes to be on the basis of the garden's real or imagined potential to fulfill important needs and desires of heart and soul and mind and body, "the whole," which is I: for quiet relaxation, for contemplation, for beauty and for physical exertion, to mention just a few. Furthermore, the love I feel for my garden may help create, maintain and support other loves: of nature, of life, of healthy living, of God, or a combination of many other different loves, all contained in the field of holistic love.

If we listen to people talking we soon discover that they use the word love a great deal and that they express a wide variety of loves in daily life. Some will find this use of the word love a misuse of a sacrosanct concept. But I disagree. The more loves we have the better.

The traditions, as mentioned above, repeatedly tell us how and what we ought, we should, we must love. In their conceptions of love, there is little room for individual freedom and choice and love of ordinary things. And yet, if we are open to experience, love is bountiful. It would do us good to stop and reflect on the many loves we have in our lives, a powerful antidote to the very limited and narrow concepts of love we have inherited.

On a related subject, I once asked my students to write a list of the things that made them happy. This is what David Hackett wrote on January 29, 1991:

Things That Make Me Happy

Awakening beside my wife
Hot showers, whirlpool bath
A well-cooked poached egg
Not gaining weight
A starry sky, a full moon
Walking in new-fallen snow
Birds at the feeder, a cardinal in snow
Splitting wood for the stove
Relaxing by the fire
Scotch Whiskey, toast and marmalade
Meringues, caramel custard
Seeing my sons, daughters and granddaughters together
Travel to new places
Some classical music, Fauré's "Requiem"
Visiting an art exhibition

Writing poetry, calligraphy
A well-hit golf ball, sinking a long putt
Canoeing in a wilderness area
A warm bed and a good book.

David has kept his list for many years. He returns to it often and it continues to give him joy. We can easily make a similar list of things we love to remind us of our many loves in everyday life. Like David's list, there is no doubt that it will continue to give us joy as well as nourish and support us.

When we realize that love is available to us in many diverse forms we must give serious consideration to the concept of holistic love and learn to count on its power in all aspects of life. Only then can we can hope to create a state of harmony and peace with the eternal demands from our complex needs and desires, at least for short moments. In those precious moments we too may sing with Paul Francis Webster:

Love is a many splendoured thing.
It's the April rose that only grows in the early spring.
Love is nature's way of giving, a reason to be living,
the golden crown that makes a man a king.
Once on a high and windy hill
in the morning mist two lovers kissed and the world stood still.
Then your fingers touched my silent heart and taught me how to sing.
Yes, true love's a many splendoured thing.[16]

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[16]Paul Francis Webster.

CHAPTER 8

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

In the introduction I suggested that we do not understand love very well and that more knowledge can help us make more informed life choices. No doubt education is the key but apart from our personal experience, where can we turn to learn more about love? Marriage counsellors may warn about the dangers of romantic love, Christian and Jewish groups may teach their respective religious concepts of love, but overall programs that offer an insight into the many different ideas about love in the Western world are rare.[1]

Love is everybody's concern. We actively seek to find and/or to give love. At the very least we should know what we are dealing with for, as we have seen, love comes in many different forms. We are never too young or too old to learn more. Concepts of love, therefore, should be widely taught, in a broad variety of settings, formal or informal.

The hesitancy amongst educators to deal with the subject is surprising. How can we account for it? Perhaps even in the case of education the power of love is too intimidating? Where might it lead us? And yet, educators can greatly contribute to our understanding of love. In fact, love's implications for education are reflected in the important role educators can assume in the dispensation of knowledge about love.

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[1]Atkinson College, York University, Toronto, is an exception. The college has offered an undergraduate course in concepts of love for more than twenty years.

Concepts of love can be taught as part of many different disciplines: science, medicine and philosophy, for example, and they can be incorporated into courses on literature, visual arts, music and social history, to name a few. Finally, educators can contribute by teaching concepts of love as a subject. In the process they can encourage discussion of inherited concepts and the values that accompany them and explore new and/or different ways of thinking about love. The purpose of this chapter, then, is to suggest ways in which such a program may be undertaken.

A Humanistic Educational Approach

In any educational situation, students and educators alike carry with them their individual, accumulated life experiences, values and beliefs as well as attitudes and inclinations. This means that the students possess a rich and varied resource which must be both recognized and utilized by the educator. It also means that any program which the educator may offer is coloured by her or his personal baggage. So, inevitably I am influenced by my experiences as an occupational therapist for more than twenty-five years and later as a counsellor and educator of adults as well as an adult student. These have all convinced me that human beings must be at the center of any educational endeavour I might undertake, and that any instruction I might offer is grist to the mill of self-knowledge and self-expansion. Furthermore, throughout this dissertation I have referred positively to human beings and the human world. It is therefore no surprise that my inclination is towards a humanistic philosophy of adult education which supports my own beliefs. Undoubtedly others will favour a different approach that is more ingenious and

true to them. While the purpose of this chapter is to suggest a program for teaching concepts love, I feel it is important, first, to attend to the values and beliefs that can support such a program. I am here referring to those favoured in humanistic philosophy of adult education and in values education with special reference to Jack Mezirow. I will briefly deal with these below.

One of the key ideas in humanistic education is "An ultimate concern with and valuing of the dignity and worth of humans and an interest in the development of the potential inherent in each person."[2] It recognizes the freedom of each individual to choose and rejects "any notion of a dogmatic or deterministic control over human beings."[3] In addition, humanistic education strongly supports self-directed learning, i.e., the idea that students learn through their own efforts. Self-directed learning is sometimes interpreted as learning in relative isolation from others. However, as I use the term it means that self-directed learners choose a line of study and individual courses on the basis of what they want to learn,[4] "without faculty committees' determining whether or not it meets externally imposed standards."[5] In other words,

Humanistic education places the responsibility for learning with the student--the

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[2]John L. Elias and Sharan Merriam, eds. Philosophical Foundations of Adult Education (New York: Robert Krieger Publishing Company, 1980), 117.

[3]Ibid., 116.

[4]Ibid., 10.

[5]K. Patricia Cross, Adults as Learners (San Francisco, Washington, London: Jossey Bass Publishers, 1982), 228.

> student is free to learn what he or she wants to learn and in a manner desired by the learner. A teacher can guide or facilitate the process, but the emphasis is upon learning rather than teaching and the student rather than the instructor.[6]

Self-directed learning defined in this manner is a key to self-expansion. While instruction is important, new learning does not just add to the knowledge the students already have but it has the potential to transform what they know and bring about a new perspective.[7] In addition to self-directed learning, a humanistic philosophy of education also emphasizes that humans have a responsibility to others and that they work "for the good of humanity in general."[8]

The educator values the uniqueness and experience of each student and establishes an atmosphere of respect and acceptance.[9] She recognizes that their contributions, alternative perspectives and/or different value systems, are all valuable resources for learning. Although she invites self-disclosure, she does not require it. In the words of David Smail, "Privacy is to be respected, not exploited."[10] The educator listens carefully and helps to elicit and clarify responses without moralizing or criticizing. In fact, "We must listen as much as we speak, keen to find out the other person's view and modify our

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[6]Elias and Merriam, Foundations, 123.

[7]Cross, Learners, 231.

[8]Elias and Merriam, Foundations, 119.

[9]Louis E. Raths, Merril Harmin and Sidney B. Simon, Values and Teaching. Working with Values in the Classroom (Columbus, Toronto, London, Sydney: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1966, repr. 1968), 40.

[10]David Smail, Taking Care: An Alternative to Therapy (London and Melbourne: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1987), 124.

position as necessary in light of this feedback."[11] Needless to say, the educator does not take any position that will hinder open dialogue and does not force her personal values on the students. She functions as a facilitator as well as a partner in learning and, as Clive Beck suggests, "Ideally, a large proportion of the 'teaching' is done by the learners who instruct each other and their 'teacher'."[12] The role of the educator, then, is to stimulate thought and help students clarify their own ideas. Beck's reflection on the scope of the educator's role in values education also applies to those teaching concepts of love:

> Individual theorists and practitioners of values education shouldn't see themselves as able singlehandedly to meet people's value needs or provide all the answers. Rather we are helping in a total process, much of which was already in place before we arrived and much of which is being guided anyhow by the learners themselves (as individuals and in groups). However, we can make a very important *contribution*, especially if we have a comprehensive view of the field, extend our efforts as broadly as possible, and link up with others around us.[13]

Finally, John L. Elias and Sharan Merriam summarize the scope and the goal of humanistic adult education as follows:

> The student as center of the experience, the teacher as facilitator, the notion of learning as a personal, internal process, and the value of group activities all lead to the ultimate goal of humanistic education--the fully developed person.[14]

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[11]Clive Beck, Learning to Live the Good Life: Values in Adulthood (Toronto: OISE Press, 1993), 224.

[12]Ibid., 244.

[13]Ibid., 264.

[14]Elias and Merriam, Foundations, 135.

Values Education in General

At this point I wish to shift the focus a bit and offer some comments on values education in general. These are not "out of place" for no one would dispute that love is a value. A course on concepts of love, therefore, can greatly benefit from ideas and insights derived from values education. In fact, in many cases "value" can be substituted by the word "love" without distorting the intended meaning.

There is no consensus on a precise definition of the term "value,"[15] but Beck's suggestion that values tell us how to live the good life[16] explains it well. Values emerge from life itself[17] and evolve, change and mature throughout life in response to personal experience.[18] They guide our behaviour and give direction to life.[19] But, as Beck points out, values can also be problematic:

> Through society we have passed on to us sound value principles and ways of life established and tested over thousands of years of human experience. From society, also, we unwittingly absorb stereotypes, prejudices, mistaken assumptions, harmful attitudes, and damaging patterns of behaviour. Humans are social beings who will always be influenced by each other.[20]

Beck further states that,

> Adults learn value not only through what is said in society but also through the

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[15]Raths et al., Values, 8.

[16]Beck, Good Life, 171.

[17]Raths et al, Values, 33-34.

[18]Ibid., 26.

[19]Ibid., 28.

[20]Beck, Good Life, 232.

> way things are done: through political, economic, legal, domestic, community, and other structures of society. This happens in two main ways. On the one hand we are influenced by the value *assumptions* implied in social structures. On the other, social structures *force* us to adopt certain values, because our well being depends in part on fitting in with the rest of society.[21]

Values, then, are passed on in speech and human interaction, through history and by way of assumptions that undergird society's institutions along with expectations that humans conform to these values. Although some are sound, others are questionable, even unacceptable in today's world. Nevertheless, they determine how we "see, think, feel and behave."[22] This is of real concern even as we deal with historical concepts of love. The problem is further exacerbated because "the values that we most take for granted do not provoke us into thought." Yet our thinking is "greatly influenced by the value assumptions we encounter."[23] Thus I would suggest that ancient concepts of Platonic and Christian love are still actively present in the minds of humans in the twentieth century where they, often unconsciously, influence how we think and feel about interpersonal and other types of love. I find this very troublesome, especially as these relate to women. I am therefore in full agreement with Raths et al. when they suggest that "as the world changes, as we change, and as we strive to change the world again, we have decisions to make and we

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[21]Ibid., 233.

[22]Jack Mezirow, Perspective Transformation--Toward a Critical Theory of Adult Education. Paper presented as a public lecture at the University of Northern Illinois. Sponsored by The Department of Leadership and Policy Studies Graduate Colloquium Committee, 27 September 1979, 10.

[23]Raths et al., Values, 200.

should be learning how to make these decisions."[24]

One way to learn is through formal or informal education which can help students become aware of alternative meaning perspectives, be open to them, and make use of them. Mezirow calls this "perspective transformation" which he defines as

> The emancipatory process of becoming aware of how and why the structure of psycho-cultural assumptions has come to constrain the way we see ourselves and our relationships, reconstituting this structure to permit a more inclusive and discriminating integration of experience and acting upon these new understandings. It is the learning process by which adults come to recognize their culturally induced dependency roles and relationships and the reasons for them and take action to overcome them.[25]

He further argues that

> Awareness of *why* we attach the meanings we do to reality, especially to our roles and relationships--meanings often misconstrued out of the uncritically assimilated half-truths of conventional wisdom and power relationships assumed as fixed--may be the most significant distinguishing characteristic of adult learning.[26]

I find that Mezirow's insights and ideas are both useful and relevant to teaching concepts of love because they, to a considerable extent, are aimed at assumptions in our cultural history which, like inherited ideas about love, continue to influence the way we see ourselves and our relationships. In the following I will, therefore, briefly touch on Mezirow's views and relate them to teaching concepts of love.

Mezirow insists that "dramatic personal and social change becomes possible by

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[24]Ibid., 35.

[25]Jack Mezirow, "Critical Transformation Theory and the Self-Directed Learner," in Self-Directed Learning: From Theory to Practice 1-23, ed., Stephen Brookfield (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1985), 6-7.

[26]Mezirow, "Critical," 11.

becoming aware of the way ideologies--sexual, racial, religious, educational, occupational, political, economic and technological--have created or contributed to our dependence on reified powers."[27] His stance supports what this dissertation has argued all along, but perhaps in a fashion not quite as elegant as Mezirow's, namely that more knowledge has the potential to help us make more informed life choices. Thus, awareness of alternative concepts of love, and the values and beliefs that support them, can effect a transformation of our perspective on love.

With reference to his own research, Mezirow explains that the dynamics of perspective transformation appear to include:

*A disorienting dilemma.
*Self examination.
*Critical assessment of personally internalized role assumptions and a sense of alienation from traditional social expectations.
*Relating one's discontent to similar experiences of others or to public issues--recognizing that one's problem is shared and not exclusively a private matter.
*Exploring options for new ways of acting.[28]

Mezirow's list is longer, but the above items are especially relevant to teaching concepts of love and will suffice in the context of this dissertation. We can apply some or all of them to concrete dilemmas we encounter. Christians, for example, may consider the perplexing demand that they love God with all their heart and mind and soul while at the same time they are exhorted to love their neighbour.

Mezirow explains that there are two paths into the structure of cultural and

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[27]Mezirow, "Perspective Transformation," 2.

[28]Mezirow, "Critical," 7.

psychological assumptions. One is the result of sudden insight and the other by successive transitions which permit us to revise specific assumptions "until the very pattern of assumptions becomes transformed."[29] Throughout his writings, Mezirow emphasizes the important role of reflection, "personalizing what is learned by applying insights to one's own life and works as opposed to mere intellectualization."[30] Finally, in the context of perspective transformation, he suggests that the role of the educator

> Is not to lead or organize for collective action but to help learners become aware of the cultural contradictions which oppress them, to research their own problems, build confidence, examine action alternatives, anticipate consequences, identify resources, educate others to the problem, foster participation and leadership and assess relevant experience.[31]

While grounded in a humanistic philosophy of adult education as outlined above, a program teaching concepts of love could very well proceed under the guidance of Mezirow's many thoughtful ideas and suggestions, as I hope to demonstrate in the following.

Teaching Concepts of Love.

I mentioned earlier that we do not know very much about love, and that with increased knowledge we can make more informed life choices. The goal of teaching concepts of love, then, is to inform, to critically assess Western concepts and to explore new and different ways of thinking about love.

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[29]Ibid., 7.

[30]Ibid., 19.

[31]Ibid., 20.

But before presenting any information on the subject, it is important to establish a bench-mark, or a starting point if you will, by asking the students to reflect on love in their personal lives and write a short exposé. For example: What is love? Where/how/when did you find it? What has love meant to you in your personal life?

In a classroom setting, one of the best ways to foster learning is through group discussions where the emphasis is on equal and reciprocal participation in an atmosphere of support, encouragement and non-judgmental acceptance. The responses to the first question, therefore, can be shared in small groups and summarized. The remaining responses serve to remind us that we are loved. They have the potential to give us strength in times when we feel unloved and/or depressed. Being of a much more personal nature, these responses are shared only if the students feel comfortable doing so. The small group summaries can be presented to the full class where they can be compared and contrasted with those of other groups. Through class discussions, a final list that incorporates the many different suggestions brought forth, can be made up. This love-list can be a reference point throughout the course and help to clarify our thoughts about love. How are separate items on the list reflected in different concepts? How do they compare to each other? Are some more important than others? As Raths et al. point out,

> Comparing is not some time-wasting process! As we examine first one thing and then another we bring them into relationship with each other, noticing similarities and differences. As this process proceeds somewhere "in the back of our heads," a decision-making process is perhaps taking place in a guarded fashion. We may not actually make a final decision until we have done a good job of comparing, but such a decision or judgment is an inevitable part of the process of comparing, and it is forming even as the evidence is accumulating.[32]

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[32]Raths et al., Values, 202.

However, a word of caution is warranted here. For critics argue that clarifying our thoughts about love (or any value) in this manner overstates the extent to which individuals can make free, individual choices. According to Beck, "The effect of group pressure on response and choice has proved to be greater than expected."[33] Nevertheless, clarifying our thoughts about love in the beginning of a course, however faltingly, offers a bench-mark against which new learning can be measured.

The aim of instruction is to convey the substance of each concept of love in as many varied ways as possible. Each concept should initially be presented by itself: more than one concept in one setting can be confusing. Different concepts can be compared later. As Beck explains,

> Instruction can help us see not only the consequences of familiar types of actions, but also new and better ways of acting to achieve our values. We may be aware of harmful effects of our behaviour--for example, on the environment--but not be able to see any alternative. Instruction can also introduce people to new ways of viewing reality . . . . The rather straightforward presentation of information about other world views . . . has helped lead to key value shifts toward a more adequate personal, global, and ecological outlook.[34]

Instruction is one of the main ways in which adults learn values. Research shows that a lecture style ranks first or second in popularity over other methods of instruction.[35]

The presentation should focus on key ideas as well as values and beliefs that support the concept. But while the educator may give the lecture, the instruction in

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[33]Beck, Good Life, 255.

[34]Ibid., 235-36.

[35]Cross, Learners, 208.

general is a joint effort: both educator and students participate. The educator makes resources available and offers information as to where alternative resources can be located while the students present related material on the basis of their own research or by using the resources made available to them. Thus the theoretical presentation can be supplemented in various suitable ways with illustrations of love from the cultural context of each concept, for example, visual arts or music from the same period. A case in point is the concept of Eros. Different artistic conceptions of the god through time indicate the change and eventual decline in the importance of the original concept: the physical appearance of Eros in the mythological age as part of the natural world, followed, on Greek soil, by the figure of the god as a marvellous youth in his prime and finally, Eros portrayed as a baby putto. Furthermore, when dealing with *The Symposium* students can re-enact the party with volunteers taking on the roles of succeeding speakers; under courtly love, troubadour lyrics and music on period instruments can be introduced while romantic love can be featured in film or video recordings.

The general idea of multifaceted instruction is to enrich the presentation of the topic, to help it come to life and to provide as many points of reference as possible to serve as aids in the recollection of the concept. Resources available are plentiful: The National Film Board, music archives, museums, art galleries and reference libraries to name just a few.

However, instruction alone does not suffice in values education. Instead of passively accepting the theory as presented, it is important to question and challenge the

various concepts of love as they have appeared in the Western tradition. The aim, then, is to actively engage the students in the topic at hand. The goal is to bring awareness of the topic to the personal level, facilitate reflection on inherited beliefs and values and thereby help the students take a personal stance through increased awareness and more informed choices. This is best accomplished through personal reflection and small group discussions as outlined above.

Ideally, students would raise questions spontaneously. Although a small group setting is more conducive to individual student participation than a large class, this unfortunately does not always happen. To help them along, the facilitator can raise a few questions which may include the following:

*What beliefs and values support this particular concept? What are some of its strengths, its weaknesses, its limitations? How does the present concept compare and contrast to other concepts? These are standard questions which should be posed in the context of every concept. The questions that follow are more particular. They can be raised when appropriate.

*Two values recur in various concepts of love, namely wholeness and perfection. How important are they in human life? Is one more important than the other? Which would you chose (if any)? What do you think the consequences of your choice might be in terms of your life's direction, its meaning and purpose?[36]

*Is love really a search for that which will make us "whole?" In what sense does love have the potential to make us whole?

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[36]Raths et al., Values, 32.

*Do you approve/disapprove of a hierarchy of love? Why?

As previously, small group summaries can be shared with the rest of the class and compared to those of the other groups. Furthermore, towards the end of the class, students can complete a short (anonymous) assignment to be handed in before the end of the class. The purpose is to help students reflect on their learning in terms of both positive aspects and concerns. The positive aspects are things the student personally liked, learned, or understood in a new way as a result of the material covered. The "concern" should be a goal, a wish, or a problem; it should state something for future consideration and not necessarily express a negative.[37] The responses are summarized by the facilitator for the next class and brought up for class discussion.

Throughout, the students are encouraged to engage in personal reflection and small group discussions of each concept. They return to the topic at hand again and again and from different perspectives. The procedure, then, facilitates learning and perspective transformation by critical assessment, reflection and small group discussion.

It is important that we explore new and/or different ways of thinking about love. But ideas are rarely completely new. In *The Symposium* Plato introduces an ancient myth but moves beyond it; Christianity rests on Judaism and Greek thought, both of which are reinterpreted; romantic love was developed and further expanded on the basis of an earlier concept of human love. These examples demonstrate that instead of speaking of new ideas it is usually more correct to speak of a reinterpretation of old ideas. This means that when

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[37]From Dr. C. Morino, York University, "Structured Criticism."

we are searching for new ways of thinking about love, although new ideas can and do appear spontaneously, we are well advised to begin in the present and then turn to the past and determine if the beliefs and values of an earlier concept can be reinterpreted and whether they have the potential to form the basis for a new concept that reflects the present time.

A Concrete Example

Ideally, the choice of a concept for exploration and examination is a class decision, but for the purpose of demonstration we can here turn to the original concept of love from mythology, Eros, love as a universal life force. This concept has been overlooked in the past. Philosophical literature on concepts of love usually begins with Plato, a key early founder of philosophy. But from an educational perspective the original concept of the mythological Eros is immensely interesting. For not only does it represent a different way of looking at love but it also offers a different world view. How well can the idea of love as a universal life force meet the criteria that could, at least potentially, determine the viability of such a concept in the twentieth century? Space does not permit an in depth inquiry. Instead I will suggest a process and voice some initial thoughts and ideas on the topic.

The criteria I referred to above form the foundation on which an inquiry can proceed. Thus, we can analyse the acceptability of the concept in its original or in modified form as well as the values and beliefs that accompany the concept. Suggestions

for discussion:

*The basic ideas of the concept: love as a life force and a universal life force.

*The human values and beliefs that accompany the original concept.

*How well the concept meets, or has the potential to meet, human needs and desires.

*Finally, to what extent the concept reflects the values and beliefs that were deemed important in other, previous concepts: dualism, exclusivity and hierarchy. Are these important in today's world or are they better left behind?

In the following I will demonstrate how an inquiry, such as I have outlined above, can proceed.

Love as a life force

Before: The ancients observed plant and animal life, the changing seasons, nature coming to life in spring, dying off in autumn and returning to life the following spring. They perceived the power, energy and creation of the natural world and attributed them all to Eros.

Now: In this century we have ample evidence that love is indeed a life force in human life. The research by John Bowlby and later researchers has shown that without love an infant will not thrive.[38] In fact, all through life we actively search for someone or something to love. Without love, life often does not seem worth living.

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[38]See CHAPTER 1, EROS.

Issue for discussion: is love a life force in human life?

Love is a universal life force.

Before: The ancients lived in nature and off nature's products. Nature and human beings as part of that nature formed an organic whole. The belief that all life shares a common life force was therefore a natural extension of the circumstances under which the ancients lived.

Now: While science has discovered that human beings share atoms and molecules as well as cell structure with all human beings before and now and also with animal and plant life, it has not yet discovered a common life force.[39]

Issue for discussion: is love a universal life force?

Values and beliefs accompanying the concept of love

Before: The original concept was formulated within a mythological world view and belief in unseen gods, indwelling and influencing all life.

Now: The twentieth century is far removed from ancient mythology and cannot support the supernaturalism with which it is associated. Emerging values and beliefs are related to an interest in the "whole earth," ecological movements and the realization that all life exists in a state of interdependence. Human beings depend on nature in countless ways, not the least of which is food, and nature depends on humans for conservation, preservation and protection of its resources. In Canada these ideas are promoted and

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[39]See CHAPTER 1, EROS.

supported by many, including eminent thinkers and scientists such as Thomas Berry, Anita Gordon and David Suzuki.[40] Supporters of this line of thinking attempt to reorient traditional values and beliefs beginning with the realization that human beings are indeed on a par with the natural world and that, for the sake of survival, human attitudes towards nature must change from predatory to protective.

Issue for discussion: is it possible to have an idea of love as a universal life force based on a reinterpretation of values and beliefs?

I trust that these examples will help others to proceed with the investigation of the remaining criteria on their own or in small group discussions. We must decide for ourselves the relative importance of any or all of the inherited values and beliefs which are not expressed in the new concept of love, most notably, the reliance on supernatural powers. Perhaps they are the most important of all and the loss of them is intolerable. In the words of Richard H. Hersh, John P. Miller and Glen D. Fielding:

> Our moral judgments ultimately rest on our beliefs about the nature of human beings and the purpose of social life. The ways in which these beliefs influence our perceptions, thoughts and feelings cannot be pinned down neatly in a formula or axiom. We cannot, in other words, "program" morality into students by teaching them a system or moral analysis.[41]

From a personal perspective, I would suggest that the concept of Eros indeed has

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[40]See, for example, Thomas Berry, The Dream of the Earth (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988). Also: Anita Gordon and David Suzuki, It's A Matter of Survival (Cambridge , Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990).

[41]Richard H. Hersh, John P. Miller and Glen D. Fielding, Models of Moral Education: An Appraisal (New York: Longman, 1980), 196.

the potential for reinterpretation in today's world. But it is entirely possible that other concepts from the past, on the basis of an examination similar to the above, will prove to have the same potential. The concept of love as a universal life force is not a panacea for the ills of the world. But I feel it fits in more harmoniously with current beliefs and values than the Christian concept which has dominated the world for more than a thousand years. I fully agree that it is not a paradigm for everyone but, by the same token, I feel that it is worth considering amongst the others that are already in place. Whether or not the idea of love as a universal life force is potent enough to engage the soul, heart and mind of the many remains to be seen.

In this chapter I have suggested ways in which educators can become involved in fostering knowledge about love by teaching concepts of love in a variety of disciplines and courses. From the perspectives of humanistic adult education and values education, I presented an approach to teaching concepts of love and outlined three important ways in which educators could get further involved: through instruction and discussion of our inherited concepts and exploration of new ones. I briefly outlined suggestions for a program on love and a way in which an exploration of new concepts can be approached.

The purpose of this dissertation has been, in part, to explore concepts of love in the Western world. To this end, I have examined several different concepts from mythology to the twentieth century. What remains is to pay tribute to the human imagination, for, as I see it, the power and creativity of the imagination is the real story

within the story.

Human beings are limited in so many ways, but in the imagination all things become possible: we can build bridges between what we are and what we would like to become, and via the imagination we can fill in and supply what we feel is missing in human life. Thus we can calm our needs and desires as well as our fears, keep hope eternal and nourish the soul. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the history of love. For example:

*The ancient Greeks had a need for knowledge and invented invisible gods, who, they believed, explained the mysteries of the world.

*A small Jewish tribe invented an all powerful god that loved it more than any other. This invention gave the Jewish people the strength to persevere and to endure.

*Human beings yearn for unconditional love and invented a god that loved them for no reason at all.

In these and other ways, the many concepts of love bear witness to the power of the human imagination. The tradition has shown how it can soar above all our shortcomings and create wonder worlds apart from the human world. What it has not taught us is to use our imagination to improve life on earth and thus enable human beings everywhere to live the good life. This is an urgent task that still goes begging.

In closing, I wish to reiterate what I said in the beginning of this chapter, namely, that love's implications for education are reflected in the important role educators can assume in fostering knowledge about love. It is my hope that this dissertation and this chapter will encourage educators to take on the challenge to teach the concepts of love in

the Western tradition as well as explore new concepts, all in the spirit of a humanistic philosophy of education.

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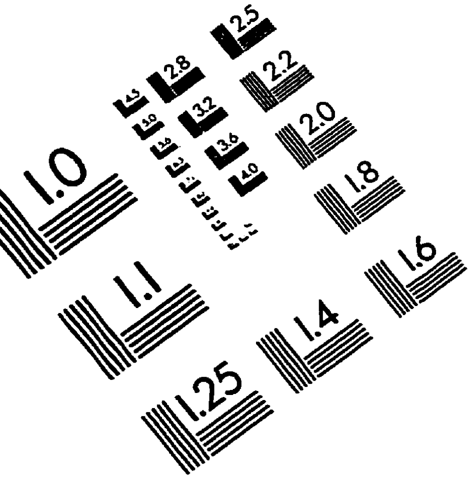
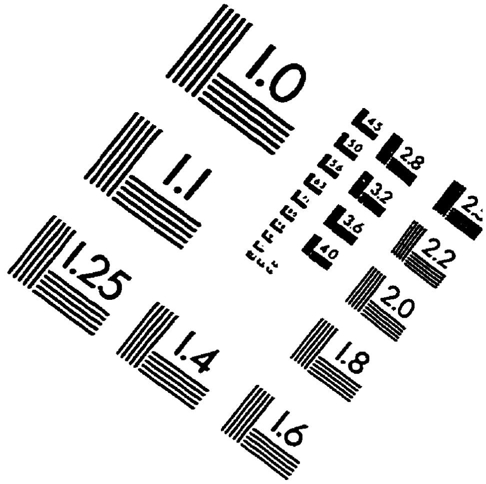
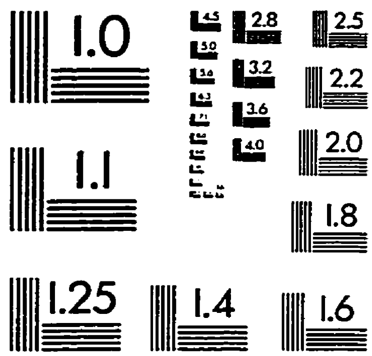
IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)







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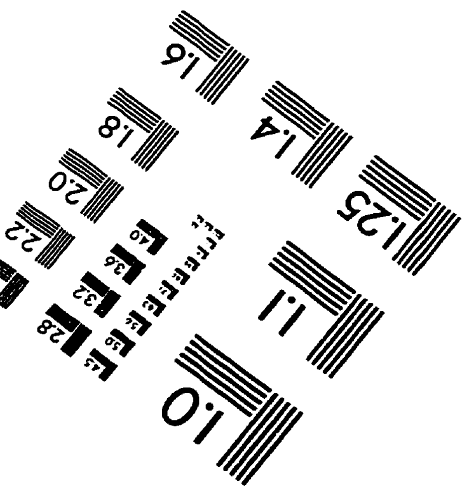

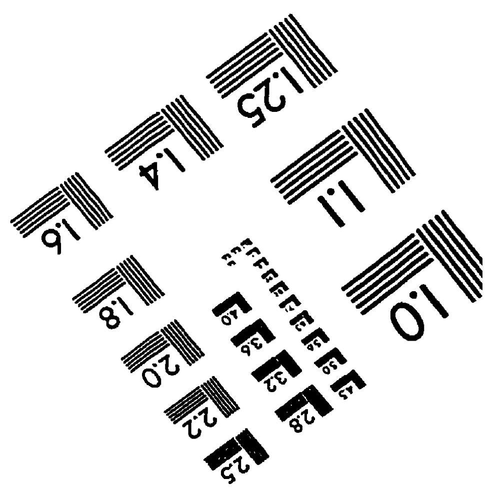

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