

Love Relationships : Vulnerability that creates freedom

*Love is the deepest language and presence of the soul.
In and through the warmth and creativity of love, the soul
shelters us from the bleakness of 'nothingness'.*

"Blessed longing

*Tell no-one else, only the wise,
For the crowd will sneer at once.
I wish to praise what is fully alive,
What longs to flame towards death.*

*When the calm enfolds the love-nights
That created you, where you have created
A feeling from the Unknown steals over you
While the tranquil candle burns.*

*You remain no longer caught
In the penumbral gloom
You are stirred and new, you desire
To soar to higher creativity*

*No distance makes you ambivalent.
You come on wings, enchanted
In such hunger for light, you
Become the butterfly burnt to nothing.*

*So long as you have not lived this:
To die is to become new,
You remain a gloomy guest
On the dark earth."*

Goethe

As an essay on love, the present writing does not offer counseling or even definitive answers or conclusions. Instead it seeks to provoke some thought in the reader of this essay, sketch some views that might be useful for affective as well as cognitive significance.

Our assumption is that love is one of the primary contributions to meaning in life. For a person in love, life is never without meaning. Love and its interdependency to the beloved, expressed in vulnerability, in its own way may underline all other forms of meaning. Our entire existence is characterized by the creation of meaning. Implicit in the need to be loved is the need to have a meaningful relationship with persons that matter to us.

Life is usually constituted of interwoven relationships. They have been living lessons in meeting defeat, helping to free my spirit and moving towards a dynamic state of growing maturity. It is one of these fundamental characteristics of love as I see it, vulnerability, that allow us paradoxically to become more free for and to grow to a stage where we easier accept the "facts of life". Love (including the related possible suffering), as I experienced it, made me understanding life better in its aspects of beauty. We all need each other to grow, to understand, to live gratefully.

First of all we briefly will try to explain what we understand by "love". Likely a lot of different perceptions and ideas on love could be put forward. We don't claim to have a final 'analytical'

concept of love. We rather opt for the reason why the “phenomenon love” is one of the most important topics in a human live.

We then will try to put forward the thesis that love and its vulnerability makes a person more understanding. That this dependency should not be considered as a limiting factor of one’s so called individual freedom, but on the contrary is at basis of it.

Consequently we will try to ‘show’ that the emotional commitment of a loving relationship usually make us “better persons”. We here will relate morality and love relationships.

Finally we will put forward the idea that a “philosophy of love” could well function as a therapy to grow to a more mature environment.

I) Why to love ?

Providing an analysis of “love” will be difficult since people use the term very differently. In western cultures some people use “love” to identify a type of personal relationship; others, to specify an element or feature of personal relationships; and still others, to indicate a certain feeling one person has toward another. There is no realistic hope of providing an exhaustive analysis which completely captures everyone’s understanding of the term.

We are not trying to lay down a law for what should be defined as what is love and what is not. We only will provide some suggestions of the meaning of love for our lives rather than precisely define the concept. It is more a sharing of some feelings-emotions of what our love experience could be about. We think that a love relationship has the aim to respect the other (beloved) one as an end, not a mean to make our own life more happy and merry. Love relationships are those in which each person takes the other’s interest as one of her own. A loving relationship will be exemplified by intimacy, care, sensitivity, and mutual support.

And let us not confuse love with sexual love, or should I call it sexual desire. Sexual desire is purely the desire for contact with another person’s body and for the pleasure which such contact produces. The physical contact, rather than the feelings and emotions that the contact might express, is the “good of sexual desire”.

The western philosophy might not be able to “capture” the essence of a “philosophy of love” because such a philosophy often tries to conceptualize a phenomenon into an intellectual firm and true measurement. Up to the point of a platonic idealization of that “good” is where love has its place in this constellation. We believe at the other hand that love escapes the pure rational and intellectual approach of any conceptualization. We have to cut through all kind of rational conceptualizations to “experience”. We admit however that a fundamental “framework” is present when we experience hic et nunc. By surrendering the ego, and giving yourself to the experience of love, we’ll find a glimpse of spiritual freedom instead of being wrapped up in notions of freedom. Love likely follow some spiritual “forms of life”. Love could be considered a combination of knowing, acting and affinity. Love which transcends our egocentric point of view combines wisdom, will and feelings.

Though we do not intend to put forward a phenomenology of love, we here distinguish three forms of (spiritually inspired) love¹ which all transcends the ego-centric and often destructive

¹ We here like mention the so called 7 colors of love which we personally consider as important guiding characteristics : **patience, sacrifice, kindness, forgiveness, universal, desireless, humility.**

forces of human love: first there is the love where both personalities are taken up or by love; they became one (a one-ness) with the reality through the unity of these two loving persons. Wagner's Tristan and Isolde are an obvious aesthetical expression of such a love. The second form can be described as altruistic love where caritas (care) and Agape are fundamental characteristics. The most divine form would be complete compassion with outside reality. A state which is often referred to Gautama Buddha. Finally a Mystic love strives to become one with God. We find these kind of ecstatic experiences in most traditions, whether it is in Buddhism, Islamic Soufism or Christian mysticism.

The very measure of a good relationship is in how much it encourages optimal intellectual, emotional and spiritual growth. So, if relationship becomes destructive, endangers our human dignity, prevents us from growing, continually depresses and demoralizes us --and we have done everything we can do to prevent its failures-- then, unless we enjoy misery, we must eventually terminate it. If at the other hand, we are stimulated and express our dignity through this love, we should graciously accept this "gift of God".

Many of us have known happy and joyous moments in our relationships. Perhaps a few of us have even know some moments of ecstasy. We should expect to invest a great deal of time and energy in our relationships. Lasting relationships don't just happen, they are created.

Some interesting research² has been performed on what love does mean to many people. How people would define love. The qualities of relationships which had been studies show us the following characteristics which are considered as the most important :

- Communication
- Affection
- Compassion / forgiveness
- Honestly
- Acceptance
- Dependability
- Sense of humor
- Romance (including sex)
- Patience
- Freedom

The qualities destructive to a loving, growing relationship were analysed as :

- Lack of communication
- Selfishness / unforgiving
- Dishonesty
- Jealous
- Lack of trust
- Perfectionism
- Lack of flexibility (not open to change)
- Lack of understanding
- Lack of respect
- Apathy

What struck me the most was that the qualities necessary for growth in any relationship were the same for all, different only in degree, not kind. Again, this was an analysis performed in the USA and as such could be biased to a modern Western society. It would be interesting to perform a similar analysis in Asia and Africa where the customs might be different. I suspect

² BUSCAGLIA, leo, Loving each other, p 18

however that, unless in very rural and traditional communities, some similar outcomes could be found in the more international cosmopolitan societies in the East.

II) Love and vulnerability

One of the most painful moments of pangs of love is the discovery that my existence does not seem to have an objective justification (without you). That the meaning which I sought in your love for me and my love from you seem to be completely contingent. A relationship is formed and shaped by relating: the sharing of activities, ideas, peeves, jokes, and in some peculiar relationships (such as marriage), money and bodies. The interaction is the glue. The more we relate, the more intermingled our lives become. The more intertwined our lives become, the more each of us has a reason to continue the relationship. The separation would, in some significant sense, tear us apart.

We now will mention two rather extreme philosophical approaches to love: one of intellectual detachment, another accepting emotional suffering as a form of understanding love. We then will try to go beyond these extremes by encompassing vulnerability as a basis for real freedom.

(a) The young Plato considered the passion of love as dangerous almost as maniacal and beyond any rational control. To be in love is like bitten by a viper, it is like a disease. Plato was of the opinion that love is a striving for perpetual possession. Plato's believe was that the lover of wisdom. The philosopher, would be able to transcend the love for persons. Love could make people insane, whereas the understanding of love could moderate the "passion" of love. Love (for being as a whole), beyond flesh and blood was considered as the ultimate good, the ideal which did influence the western thinking until the 18th-19th century.

The Stoics, in line with some Buddhistical thoughts, believe that emotions (such as love and the desire for the other) could easily disturb a peaceful life. Negative emotions such as jealousy and anger could easily become excessive and therefore disturb a "good life". Secondly, emotions cannot be easily mastered and controlled. Love could therefore undermine any strict morality according to this argumentation. Last, allowing love implies a surrender to something "external" which jeopardizes the personal integrity and dignity. Stoicism tries to overcome this dependency of emotions by detachment or distancing themselves from emotions. But this argumentation in line with the later Rationalism foregoes the real power of emotions. It might be true that love cannot be controlled. No moral mathematics is possible. Love (as part of "goodness") cannot be easily measured. Any homogenization of goodness and love for that purpose is destined to fail.

This early philosophical trial to overcome the suffering of love doesn't really satisfy us. It seems to us too rationalistic in its approach. It does not take into consideration the enormous energy and power love usually causes. One remembers here Dante's notion that the secret rhythm of the universe is the rhythm of love which moves the stars and the planets.

(b) At the other extreme are people who believe that one has to go through these painful experiences to understand better.

Why do people consider love as a treasure and at the same as a cruel reality? Why does lead a self analysis and intellectual understanding not to a fully understanding of love? Intellectual analysis and sharp wickedness 'protect' us from a deeper feeling of what the truth of love could be. According to many authors, one has to "suffer" to really understand and "feel" the absence of the other whom we are caring for. It is the vulnerability that constitutes the experience of being respected by the other for what we really are. Suffering because of love usually work very

cataleptic: it creates a force which is much more powerful than intellectual analysis. The experience of our intellect cannot be compared with the open wound of being left by our love, of the sharpness of our heart pain. The intellect would be overruled by these kind of experiences. The intensity of these sensual perceptions forces the actor to accept the reality of love. One is dwelled into the pain. One cannot fake, one does not escape the bluntness of the experience compared with the distance of the intellectual activity to grasp the same phenomenon.

Suffering could constitute the self knowledge. Emotional feelings are perceived as our understanding and therefore knowledge. Suffering is part of our self-knowledge. The pain of a loss of love makes our feeling of love very obvious and understood. Love is not a separated fact of what we perceive because love discloses this feeling, it is part of it. Love is no configuration in the heart which is waiting for a 'discovery', she is "incorporated" and constituted by grievous experiences.

The pain because of delay forces us to be humble. The pain adds colours to our understanding. If well understood, the pain and sorrow because of love could teach us as a lot of love and life as such.

(c) Although both extreme argumentation –detachment of love that opts for a serene divine life at one hand, and at the other hand the Nietzschean option of absorbing the sorrow and pain of love to understand ourselves and the other better—are valid to a certain extent. However the argumentation doesn't fully take into account one of the basic features of love, its vulnerability that can lead to possible freedom. It is the vulnerability to the other which can transcend both the deep sorrow and the indifferent detachment. Without complete ignoring the ego-less detachment nor the complete ego-centric absorption of love('s suffering), we believe that a more harmonious approach could bring us further to understand ourselves and the other.

Not all feelings of love should be painful. Maybe suffering is not the only way to come close to understand love. Love is the willingness to be with someone, to share these feelings with somebody, to accept the conversation of the interdependency between two persons in love and accept all feelings which are related to this relationship. To know one's love is accepting to make yourself vulnerable, so show yourself , to trust the other , to have confidence in others. Loves postpones all our doubts which are part of this vulnerability There are no necessary of sufficient conditions to define what love is. One has to live. Love is a love story.

No-one can hurt you as deeply as the one you love. When you allow the Other inside your life, you leave yourself open: vulnerable. Even after years together, your affection and trust can be disappointed. Life is dangerously unpredictable. People change, often quite dramatically and suddenly. Bitterness and resentment quickly replace belonging and affection. Every friendship travels at some time through the black valley of despair. This tests every aspect of your affection. You lose the attraction and the magic. Your sense of each other darkens and your presence is sore. If you can come through this time, it can purify your love; falsity and need will fall away. We don't have to be stuck in the suffering. Overcoming it will bring you onto new ground where affection can grow again.

The beloved person is given absolute permission to come into the deepest temple of your spirit. Your presence and life can become their ground. It takes great courage to let someone so close. Since the body is in the soul, when you let someone so near, you let them become part of you. In the sacred kinship of real love two souls are twinned. The outer shell and contour of identity becomes porous. At such (ecstatic) times you suffuse each other.

Love overcomes us, it surprises our heart and cannot be fully controlled. Love is in a certain sense subject to Mercy.

To laugh, in contrast to suffer from love is a social phenomenon where communication between two persons is necessary. It presupposes a context of trust, whereas suffering is usually a very "egocentric" experience or activity. Those who believe that love can be interpreted as a form of mourning flirts with solipsism. Those who believe that love can be interpreted as form of laughter (smiling conversation indicating empathy and compassion) insists that love transcends solipsism and that love leads to "community".

If we are unwilling to undergo the interpersonal negotiations, the bickering, the inevitable annoyance, animosity, or anger that is part of living with another person, we will never be able to give our love to anyone. Detachment of love emotions deprives us from some wonderful colours of life. There is no guarantee that love will yield happiness and meaning. Contingency of love (and life as such) remains. There are no strict personal rules to guarantee love will succeed. But that should not make us fatalistic. On the contrary.

In the relationships between men and women in most societies, this longing for permanence translates into the constancy of commitment that marriage entails. To this extent sexual love and married love are internally related to each other. Augustinus (in contrast with Plato) was more optimistic about love as such: he thought that love (and falling in love) gives a feeling of meaning to the other.

III) The cognitive meaning of emotions such as love

Experience require interpretations of these perceptions. Trying to capture love in an intellectual way is doomed to fail and this analytical approach could be interpreted by some as an escape not to love, but only to think about love. The forceful impression of a feeling of love includes the acknowledgement of our own incompleteness and our own vulnerability. It is hard to escape that feeling. When you understand what is (love), you don't demand an explanation anymore. You just live it.

Someone's love for another person incorporates evaluations of inherent worth whereas other emotions do not. These evaluations are in a manner of speaking indefensible: for in them, something is deemed good in itself. The man in love wants for example, to be with his beloved; and he wants this simply because he enjoys her company for its own sake. There is no reason for it, he just wants to be with her. That can be called neither reasonable nor unreasonable. Love is neither caused nor based on reason. Instead love is bestowed: it is a gift from one person to another, a result of personal choice that is neither completely caused nor rationally justified.

Love is a gift and goes beyond rationality. Though rationality doesn't bring any justification, it can be useful in our thinking about love as a way of reflection and introspection.

What we can say is that to love others simply because of their money is seen as shallow or no reason for love, while to love them because of their character or moral sensitivity is not only acceptable, but laudatory. We love somebody for certain characteristics (intelligence, moral insight, personality etc) but this is usually not the reason why we fall in love. That is more bestowed if I may say so...a gift from the other. In short, reason often play little role in initiating (love) relationships. But after relating to a person, we can rationally evaluate our relationship to decide if we should abandon, preserve or alter it. Reason doesn't command behavior; rather it

audits or commends it. It is in this sense that people should (and often do) have reasons for love.

Practical reason does not compel action of loving someone. To attain knowledge is not the sole end of human action. Rather, it evaluates, justifies and subsequently redirects it. Reason tells us whether our choices are moral or prudent, thereby helping us to decide how to behave in the future. In that sense we have “reasons” for love. But reason doesn’t guide us in the act of loving itself or even the initial choice of the beloved.

We often are far too rational in our relationships, far too ordered, organized and predictable. We need to find a place, just this side madness and irrationality, where we can from time to time, leave the mundane and move into spontaneity and serendipity, a level that includes a greater sense of freedom and risk. An active environment full of surprises, which encourages a sense of wonder....a bond of love is easy to find in an environment of joy. When we laugh together we bypass reason and logic, as the clown does. We speak a universal language.

Love teaches us the finiteness and mortality of our lives. In some instances this could lead to melancholy which has been the inspiration of so many beautiful love poems. There is always the possibility that the other might leave us which reinforces the contingency of love. To remain in the illusion of “security in sameness” is to miss a true understanding of what life is all about. Life was meant to be lived in surprise.

The essential painful want or loss (of deprivation) of the other is the source of our desire and is the moving spirit of love. Differently said the Other is a promise. The other is the promise of fulfillment. It is the hope for better, for a deep understanding of the meaning of our existence.

“ We could say that the un-lived life is not worth examining” as Socrates once said. Humans are active, embodied creatures, not disembodied self-conscious knowers. We live our life, in a certain body about which we can or cannot be conscious. Our bodies are not mere appendages to the self or vehicles through which the self moves. I would rather say that the “self” constitutes the body to an extent and vice versa (in case of some physical or mental “retardness”). Our bodies, personalities, beliefs, desires and wishes are not accidents. Rather, they are significant personal characteristics, essential to our sense of self. Perhaps more importantly for present purposes, they are the cases upon which we explain (though that is not necessarily needed) our love for others, and others’ love for us.

The “object” (if that would be a proper definition at all) we want to know is diverse and continuously changing. Hence it cannot be known in its entirety. Moreover, it has conflicting elements and therefore the object of love is ambiguous. Love always will “escape” us if tried to be caught. Nonetheless, to a great extent we can know people we love by how they behave. Behavior does not just reflect who we are, it constitutes who we are. We don’t become honest by thinking about honesty. We must be honest. And we don’t become kind by closing our eyes and wishing we were kind- we must act kindly.

Since we constantly change, self-knowledge is now an ongoing effort, not a one-time achievement. Moreover, since both you and I continuously change, a one-time commitment now will not help us then – after all then we will be not the people who committed ourselves to stay together. Rather, we should commit ourselves to act in ways which enhance the chances we will stay together, e.g. by regularly communicating.

Regardless of the precise explanation, our attraction is strongly influenced, if not determined, by our background beliefs – whether general, fine-grained, or particular. Background beliefs influence current beliefs, attitudes and perceptions; they provide a context (a framework) within

which we can understand the significance of others' behavior. Now awareness of this framework (in which we are brought up and in which we currently) could cause unnecessary communication breaks with someone we love, especially if the beloved is from another cultural "framework".

Understanding and loving a person from other cultures (with other framework) is more difficult but not impossible. Communication between members of the same culture is often easier; they make it easier to interpret the other's behavior. However, communication between cultures is not incomprehensible as long as we make a serious effort to understand the other's background information. The other's "framework". The influence of background beliefs runs deep. It affects even "simple" perception. That is especially significant since most of us assume that perception is "pure". Our framework constitutes our perception. Hence why tradition³, which basically incorporates our framework, is important when dealing with another person, especially in close relationships such as a love relationship.

Knowing how our views of others are formed and maintained can help us initiate and sustain close love relationships. Unless we are aware of the process of knowing others, we may find ourselves in detrimental relationships, or we may irreparably damage sound relationships by over-reaching to relatively insignificant problems.

IV) Morality and Love

We here put forward the old Greek philosophical thesis that close personal relationships are likely to be formed and persist only among morally good people; and close personal relationships are prerequisites for the development of morally good people. The best friends are people of good moral character and those of good moral character are capable of being the best friends.

Freud even said one that in the development of mankind as a whole, just as in individuals, love alone acts as the civilizing factor in the sense that it brings a change from egoism to altruism.

Morality -like thinking- is not some mysterious and inexplicable practice of abstract rational contemplation, but a complex habit. Thinking, emotions and morality are in a way all habits which are based on complex patterns of dispositions through which we interact with our environment and other people.

It seems that love relationships are likely to promote happiness only if partners have moral traits. Close love relationship are non-egoistic. It is impossible to have a love relationship unless we can care for the interests of others, and that we cannot do unless we have some "spiritual" objectives in life. Or as some would say, if the persons are moral. Again, moral or spiritual traits alone will not guarantee that people will be happy together.

Moral education (whether by others or by ourselves) is successful if we become habitually sensitive to the needs and interest of others. That is, if we are moral or spiritual, we do not have to decide to consider the interests of others, we just will consider their interest.

³ A ritual in certain traditional framework is defined as an established form of ceremony. A tradition is defined as the handling down of information, beliefs and customs by word of mouth or by example from one generation to another. These are things which bind and bond us, they are valued bonds that make working toward and facing tomorrow meaningful. They are passed along from generation to another, they always remain something certain, in a world of uncertainty. They offer an easily understood meaning to what might otherwise seem senseless.

Sympathy e.g tends to be non-specific: by learning to respond to the interests of friends we learn to the interest of acquaintances and even strangers. There is a strong correlation between the extent of our involvement in close (love) relationships and the extent of our ability and motivation to care for other people.

Self-knowledge is best fostered in a love relationship if our partner has certain spiritual traits, most especially honesty, empathy, kindness and tolerance.

Trying to know ourselves could imply that we try to know ourselves better through a love relationship, who the other is, and what dynamics are required to keep us united. It is an exciting, and sometimes extremely difficult journey. Worth living though since there is nothing greater in life that loving another and being loved in return, for loving is the ultimate of experiences.

We are temporary beings, and nothing lasts forever, unless our soul, our spiritual legacy. As result, also relationships cannot be forever, though we should act as if there are permanent. When Don Juan turns into an idealistic searcher for perfection -which is an impossibility in se-- who moves from one woman to another in his quest for the absolute, we are led to believe that he has real love for each of his women. Nevertheless, it is a limited love since it precludes the possibility of permanence. Though displaying the grandeur and the glory of instinctual freedom that men have always cherished, he finds no way of transmuting it into the permanent love that men (and women) also desire. So instead of searching for the ultimate perfection, we should try to understand the relationship itself. Then we likely find out that we will gain freedom, not in the quantity but in the quality of love. It might lead to some ecstatic moment of life which will become ingredients of our soul.

In everyone's life there is a great need for a soul friend. In this love, you are understood as you are without the mask or pretension. You can be as you really are. Love allows understanding to dawn, and understanding is precious. Understanding nourishes belonging. When you really feel understood, you feel free to release your self into the trust and shelter of the other person's soul. "You are like nobody since I love you". This art of love discloses the special and sacred identity of the other person. Love is the only light that can truly read the secret signature of the other person's individuality and soul. Love alone is literate in the world of origin; it can decipher identity and destiny. Love is anything but sentimental. Love is the most real and creative form of human presence. Love is the threshold where divine and human presence ebb and flow into each other. Where you are understood, you are at home. All presence depends on our consciousness and awareness. Therefore awareness is one of the greatest gifts you bring to your (love) friendship. This art of love discloses the special and sacred identity of the other person. Love is the only light that can truly read the secret signature of the other person's individuality and soul.

When your affection is kindled, the world of your intellect takes on a new tenderness and compassion. This affection brings integration and healing. You look and see and understand differently. Most fundamentalism, greed, violence and oppression can be traced back to the separation of ideas (in our head) and affection (heart). Both should be in harmony to create a "better" world.

Aristotle says in De Anima "perception is by definition a form of affection and being moved; and the same goes for thinking and knowing. Thinking particularly is like peculiar affection of the soul".

V) ***A philosophy of Love as a Therapy (for improved maturity)***

Giving love without any expected return has been one of the basic principles of Christianity. A similar idea had been expressed in the old Greek paradigm of Agape. A purified love that bestows goodness indiscriminately. It is outpouring of an infinite power to love regardless of the merit in the recipient.

A truly compassionate life⁴ is one in which caring about shows itself in a willingness to take care of. Without intruding upon the autonomy of the other person, our sympathy transforms itself into action. Feeling and behavior then make a total unity that manifests an ever-increasing capacity to love life wherever it occurs, and in itself. This goal may be unrealizable, but it is worth striving for.

Love can be very ambivalent indeed. It can be determined as unstable in terms of personal love to somebody in particular at times. But love has also the enormous force and vitality that can lead to compassion in social and political life. In that sense love can be therapeutic on a personal and social level.

We all have experienced "failing" in love.....and most of us have been raised to believe that strength lies in independence. Society tells us that we must make our own way. We come to believe that only when we no longer depend upon others can we say we have reached full maturity. We see need as immature and dependence as weakness. We fear commitment in that it may destroy our individuality and our much coveted freedom. In so feeling, we build self-imposed barriers to genuine encounter and the deep unions we so desperately seek. This is, indeed, a curious paradox. Deeply committed to freedom, liberation and independence on one hand, and a deep need for togetherness on the other, we strive to unite in love.

Spiritual values don't restrict , they protect. Most values (spiritual, moral, social, personal) values contain an affective element which is often the source of the commitment to the content of the value, the motivational force behind.

In general, love is an achievement, an attainment or formation of positive and purposeful adjustments that have been evolving in individual for quite while and will continue to do so⁵.

It is the compassion talk, the sacrifice talk, the commitment talk that though too seldom heard, remains the singularly most valuable stuff of which loving relationships are made. Relationships do matter, intimacy is necessary to sustain a good, productive life. A loving touch or healthy laugh can heal, positive relating brings physical, psychological and mental well being.

⁴ What Buddhism encourages us to do is to look for causes rather than treat the symptoms, and these causes are to be found, not in the operation of the external processes but rather with ourselves, in our attitudes, beliefs, and values. There we discover in the West a starkly individualistic attitude with other selves, whereas by contrast, Eastern thinking sees personal fulfillment in inter-dependence, both with the world of nature and with other human beings.

⁵ *ibidem*, p.197. to bring another into our life in love we must be willing to give up certain destructive characteristics. For example:

- The need to be always right
- The need to first in everything
- The need to be constantly in control
- The need to be perfect
- The need to be loved by everyone
- The need possess
- The need to be free of conflict and frustration
- The need to change others for our need
- The need to manipulate
- The need to blame
- The need to dominate

A loving relationship is mystical, yet concrete, dynamic experience, fluid, and end in itself rather than being a means to some end, where there are no expectations of the other, yet a deep appreciation of relationship because of its intrinsic value, its possibilities, its wonder and its truth as it is experienced with the other. In a love relationship there is an awakening between you, a sense of ancient knowing. Love opens the door of ancient recognition. You enter. You come home to each other at last.

A loving relationship is the unconditional acceptance of another person. Helping him or her to attain personal goals, to grow and encouraging that growth. A loving relationship is like ideal "home": within it you can totally be yourself, be accepted, understood, trusted and respected as a valuable being. It is a nurturing environment where effort is made to provide enough caring and security so that one can share hopes and fears and where one is encouraged to learn and grow. Unselfish love cares for the beloved for the sake of her/him. There is no the slightest shade of self-seeking possession. Desiring and too "emotional" love at the other hand could easily turn into an egotistic passion. That then automatically leads to suffering.

"The heart of Elijah, the prophet, was beginning to give signs of alarm; he was enjoying being at this woman's side. Love could be a more frightening experience than standing before the soldier with arrow aimed at his heart; if the arrow had struck him, he would be dead –and the rest was up to God. But if love struck him, he alone would have to take responsibility for the consequences.... She from her side would continue on loving him, because for the first time in her life, she knew freedom. She was free, for love liberates."

Love begins with paying attention to others, with an act of gracious self-forgetting. This is the condition in which we grow. Love is our deepest nature: consciously or unconsciously, each of us searches for love. We often choose such false ways to satisfy this deep hunger. An excessive concentration on our work, achievements or spiritual quest can actually lead us away from the presence of love. In the work of soul, our false urgency can utterly mislead us. Paul's letter to the Corinthians is beautiful: "love is always is never boastful or conceited; it is never is rude or selfish; it does not take offence, and is not resentful. Love is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes". Elsewhere the Bible says: "Perfect love casts out all fear".

Why then do we fear loss of our favored status as sex partner in ways and to degrees what we do not fear loss of our favored bridge game partner? If people do not think sex is the most important element of their relationship, then why would they be so disturbed were they to lose their favored sexual status. Perhaps sex, besides the biological procreative status of men and women, has unique symbolic function: it indicates or signals that the other is especially favored – not just as a sexual partner, significant other. If so, then being sexually favored could be a special importance to a long-term relationship, even if sexual activity is not. That belief that sex has such a symbolic function might well explain why sex is often the focus of jealousy. Hence why a love relationship will require an expression of a strong commitment, in the form of liberate loyalty to the other. This loyalty enhances the self-respect and the respect for the other.

Jealousy on the other hand diminishes only when we regain a feeling of worth and self-respect, stop internalizing the problem and begin view it objectively as something stemming from our personal demands and needs. They may arise from our desire for status or loyalty. They may be due to our security, our need to control, to possess, our need for exclusivity, or fear of loss of pace. Loyalty in relationship is based on voluntary devotion. Perhaps greatest love presupposes the greatest freedom. There is an old saying which suggests that love must be set free, and when it comes back to you, only then will you know real love.

In love, we strive, through empathic behavior, to erase the boundaries between wrongdoer and wronged, even we do not understand the behavior. We should let go our pride. It is usually false, and it creates barriers and prevents closeness. Forgiveness becomes the means for correcting our misconceptions; it allows us to see only the love in others and ourselves, and nothing else. It is a step on complete compassion. Emotional pain and psychological pain are at least as debilitating as physical pain. Few of us will escape these pains in our lifetime. It can only be dealt with. Forgiveness is often the major, if only, out.

Forgiveness foregoes hatred, spite, and anger. It accepts our love...forgiveness might lead to greater wisdom and a new more sensitive relationship. Our greatest philosophers and religious leaders have also been our most forgiving persons. Through the Buddha's forgiveness and compassion, millions have been helped to insight and acceptance. Jesus was model of forgiveness. He forgave the prostitutes, evil-doers, betrayal by his own disciples and, ultimately, even those who put him to death. True forgiveness is an act of the highest of human behaviors. Buddhism would argue that we should let go. Why do we want to cling to pain? There is nothing you can do about the wrongs of yesterday. It is not yours to judge. Why hold on the very thing which keeps us from hope and love?

If we are unable to forgive others, we cannot expect others to forgive us.

We should try to understand and have empathy strengthened with compassion; then, forgiveness is easy. It is the forgiver who is freed in forgiving. Leave judgement and revenge to heaven.

The greatest gift new love brings into your life is the awakening to the hidden love within. This makes you independent. Free. You are now able to come closer to the Other, not out of need or with the wearying apparatus of projection, but out of genuine intimacy, affinity and belonging. It is a freedom. Love should make you free. And the more love you give away, the more love you will have.

The "truth" for every person, worth to be proud of, is expressed in the creative warmth of love, guided by the sharpness of wisdom. Only forgiving love and the strenght of wisdom will prevail and lead us in 'good and bad' times, and make us real free persons.

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