LOVE

JOHN COWBURN
Love
Marquette Studies in Philosophy
Andrew Tallon, editor

Harry Klocker, S.J. William of Ockham and the Divine Freedom
Margaret Monahan Hogan. Marriage as a Relationship
Gerald A. McCool, S.J. The Neo-Thomists
Max Scheler. Ressentiment
Knud Løgstrup. Metaphysics
Howard P. Kainz. Democracy and the Kingdom of God
Manfred Frings. Max Scheler: A Concise Introduction into the World of a Great Thinker
G. Heath King. Existence Thought Style: Perspectives of a Primary Relation, portrayed through the work of Søren Kierkegaard
Augustine Shuttle. Philosophy for Africa
Paul Ricoeur. Key to Husserl’s Ideas I
Karl Jaspers. Reason and Existenz
Gregory R. Beabout. Freedom and Its Misuses: Kierkegaard on Anxiety and Despair
Manfred S. Frings. The Mind of Max Scheler. The First Comprehensive Guide Based on the Complete Works
Claude Pavur. Nietzsche Humanist
Pierre Rousselot. Intelligence: Sense of Being, Faculty of God
Immanuel Kant. Critique of Practical Reason
Gabriel Marcel. Gabriel Marcel’s Perspectives on The Broken World
Karl-Otto Apel. Towards a Transformation of Philosophy
Michael Gelven. This Side of Evil
William Sweet, editor. The Bases of Ethics
Gene Fendt. Is Hamlet a Religious Drama? As Essay on a Question in Kierkegaard
Pierre Rousselot. The Problem of Love in the Middle Ages. A Historical Contribution
Jan Herman Brinks. Paradigms of Political Change: Luther, Frederick II, and Bismarck. The GDR on Its Way to German Unity
Margaret Monahan Hogan. Marriage As a Relationship
Gabriel Marcel. Awakenings
Roger Burggraeve. The Wisdom of Love in the Service of Love
Jules Toner. Love and Friendship
Anton Pannekoek. Lenin As Philosopher. A Critical Examination of the Philosophical Basis of Leninism
Gregor Malantschuk. Kierkegaard’s Concept of Existence
John Cowburn, S.J. Love
Roger Alan Deacon. Fabricating Foucault: Rationaing the Management of Individuals
Between 1959 and 1962 I wrote a philosophy thesis on love, to a degree; also, not for any degree, I wrote a long theological essay in which I discussed some of the theological implications of my theory. I put these together and revised the combination for publication. In 1967 it came out as a book, *Love and the Person* (London: Geoffrey Chapman), and in 1972 it went out of print. This book has many of the ideas and quotations that were in the earlier one, but it is a different work, not a revised edition of it.

John Cowburn, S.J.
Jesuit Theological College
Melbourne
August 2002
Introduction

I have sympathy for people who have tried to understand suffering, love or life, who have failed and who have then turned defeat into victory by saying: “We are not meant to understand this. It is holy and it would be a desecration to analyse it, to distil its essence, to classify its forms and put them on a chart. To grasp it intellectually would be to crush it; to pin it down would be to kill it. The highest wisdom is to see where thought cannot go, to respect mystery and live in wonder.” I believe, however, that bright mysteries like love do not forbid thought but invite it. I also believe that if we attain some understanding of them we will not lose interest in them, as a person loses all interest in a crossword puzzle as soon as he or she has solved it, and that while understanding means the end of bewilderment it does not put an end to wonder.

Isn’t there a danger that the intellectual analysis of love might make us self-conscious and rob us of our spontaneity? Well, first, I refuse to believe that love with a warm heart and a clear head is necessarily feebler or less spontaneous than love with an equally warm heart and confusion upstairs. Second, to be reasonably clear about the different kinds of love can be of practical value. If, for instance, a young adult wants to leave home and the parents say, “People who love each other want to be together, so if you love us you won’t go,” they confuse different kinds of love and out of that confusion comes emotional conflict. In this and other cases the making of distinctions can be liberating.

Now let me say some things about this book.

Though at times I venture into ethics, my chief aim is to say what love is and this book should not be catalogued (as my *Love and the Person* sometimes was) under the heading “sexual ethics” or “moral theology.”
It is not a “how to” book or practical guide. For instance, I say in a general way that married couples have children but I do not say how many children different kinds of couple have, when they have them, or in what circumstances they wisely decide to have none; I say that growing children become gradually more and more independent but give no advice to parents about how much independence they should give to their children at this or that age; and I say that conflicts are inevitable in many human relationships without going into detail about how they can be resolved.

I quote from a wide range of authors and there is a reason for this. When it can be shown that much the same thing was said by Aristotle or Cicero in ancient Greece or Rome, by medieval writers, by Shakespeare around 1600, by philosophers, psychologists, novelists, poets and dramatists of different countries and times, and by Christians, Jews and others, there is reason to believe that it is not a belief which is peculiar to our few countries at this present moment but belongs at least to a Western “perennial philosophy” or wisdom. Whether it is more universal than that is the subject of chapter 26.

In a somewhat artificial way, since many writers on love have been Christians who mixed philosophical and theological reflections, I have kept theological considerations until the last chapter of this book.

I use “he” as short for “he or she” when the expression occurs more than once in a sentence and I trust that the reader will accept this. Also, I have not altered quotations so that I say that Kierkegaard said that we love “actual individual men” and expect the reader to know that he (or his translator) meant “men and women.”
# Table of Contents

**Part 1~Self-love and Love in General**

1. **Acceptance**
   - Acceptance can be mature and dignified
   - Resigned acceptance
   - Acceptance of being

2. **Self-love**
   - Self-love is self-acceptance
   - What the self is
   - The fruits of self-love
   - Self-rejection
   - Self-love is free
   - Moral evil

3. **The altruism debate**
   - The denial or rejection of altruism
   - The reality & goodness of altruism
   - What is a gift?
   - Altruism and the mutuality of love
   - The thesis of this book

**Part 2~Solidarity-Love**

4. **Having children**
   - Goodness distributes itself
   - Instinct
   - The reproductive instinct
   - The influence of society
   - Are children *given* existence?
5. Parental love 55
   What parents usually do 56
   Obligations of parents and rights of children 57
   The altruism of parents 59
   The benefits of parenthood 60
   That parental love is physical 61
   Quasi-parents 63

6. Small sons and daughters 65
   The benefits of having good parents 66

7. The parent-child relationship when children are older 69
   Free (involving free will) and mutual 69
   Communication 69
   Leaving home & letting go 71
   Separation & conflict 72
   Parental & filial love sometimes fade 73
   Rejection 74
   The love that endures 76
   Quasi-parental relationships 76

8. Fraternal and similar loves 77
   The experience of solidarity 77
   Factors which intensify solidarity-love 80
   Observations on this love 82
   How long this love lasts 85
   The reach of this love 86

9. False forms of solidarity-love 91
   Parental aberrations 91
   False filial love 93
   The selfish family 95
   Tribalism 96
   Wholes and parts 98
   What is wrong in these cases 98
Contents

10. Solidarity-love in general 101
   Is this love free? 102
   The person in this love 103
   The significance of this love 104

Part 3—Ecstatic Love

11. The steps towards ecstatic love 109
   Meeting 109
   Presence or being-with 112
   Communication 112
   Likeness & difference: nature & choice 114
   Knowing another person 115

12. Ecstatic love 119
   Love is free 120
   The other 122
   Inexplicable? 127

13. The other person’s nature and qualities 131

14. Ecstatic love is mutual and free: the relationship 135
   Equality 137
   The ecstatic union 138
   Maturity and self-love in ecstatic love 141

15. The future 143
   Conflict 144
   Objectivisation or expression 145
   Ecstatic love sometimes ends 148
   Love is eternal: ecstatic love is meant to last 151

16. The benefits and significance of ecstatic love 153
   Love and realism 154
   That the benefits are not its -motive 156
   Loneliness 157
   The significance of ecstatic love 160
Part 4—The Two Kinds of Ecstatic Love:

Sexual Love and Friendship

17. Sexual love and friendship 165
   1 The role of physical appearance 166
   2 The fascination with physical appearance 166
   3 The role of instinct 166
   4 Sexual love is felt in the senses 168
   5 Physical nearness 168
   6 Physical contact 169
   7 Sexual intercourse 169
   8 Exclusiveness 170
   Conclusion 171

18. Sexual love 173
   Analysis of these early stages 174
   Commitment 176
   Chance, nature and free will 177
   Sense and spirit 180
   The need for maturity 180

19. The sexual relationship 181
   The ecstatic union 183
   The objectivisation of this love: children 187

20. Marriage 189
   Conflict 191
   Love can end 192
   Love is eternal 194
   Marriage: the social institution 195

21. The significance of sexual love 199

22. Sexual pseudo-love 203
   Need—“love” 203
   “Romantic Passion” 205
### 23. Friendship 209
- The necessity of friendship 212
- Kinds of friendship 212
- Groups of friends 214
- Friendship and society 215
- Friendship is eternal 216
- The significance of friendship 216

#### Part 5: The Two Loves Taken Together

### 24. The two loves 219
- The two loves 220
- Co-existence of the two loves 222
- Sometimes ecstatic love ends, leaving solidarity-love 222
- Love, value-theory & morality: two philosophies 224
- Criticism and a suggested synthesis 227

### 25. Two theories of love 229
- The Physical Theory 229
- The Ecstatic Theory 232
- About the two theories 233
- The thesis of this book 234

### 26. How universal is all this? 235
- The earliest human beings 235
- The evolution of behaviour 237
- Civilisation and instincts 238
- Other cultures and subcultures 239
- Value-judgements on cultures 240
  - Cultural relativism 241
  - Natural law, primitive nature 242
  - Natural law, rational human nature 243
- An evolutionary theory 244
Part 6—Theological Implications

27. Theological implications 247

1. The Trinity 247
   - The Trinity and the idea of God 247
   - The two processions 249
   - My theory 252
   - Arguments for my theory 252
   - Objections to the Victorine theory 253

2. Nature and grace: the two initiatives 254

3. Creation 254
   - The motive of creation 254
   - God's love for us as beings 256
   - Communication 257
   - Our self-love 258
   - Our love of God 259
   - The intrinsic value of the natural order 259
   - The problems of suffering and evil 261

4. Grace 262
   - Revelation and faith 263
   - Solidarity-love in the order of grace 265
   - Self-love in the order of grace 267
   - Our ecstatic love for the divine persons 267
   - Our love is both altruistic and beneficial 269
   - Equality 271
   - Ecstasy: the indwelling 272
   - The ecstatic union 273
   - Objectivisation 274
   - The natural world in the new situation 275
   - Natural troubles 276
   - The relationship can be ended: sin 276
   - Heaven 278
5. Christian love of other human beings 279
   The idea that Christian love is different 279
   A better idea 280
   Love can end 282
   The Church 283

Conclusion 284

Bibliography 285

Index 291
Part 1

Self-love and Love in General
1 Acceptance

I am going to maintain that there are different kinds of love, which have some different essential elements: for instance, personal revelation and equality are essential to friendship but not to the love between parents and children, and sexual love is of its nature exclusive whereas friendship is not. There is, however, one essential element which is in all forms of love, and in every form it is of primary importance. It is, I maintain, the distilled essence of love and it is consent or acceptance.¹

I have, unfortunately, learned that to many if not most people the word “acceptance” means resigned acceptance. When they hear it they think of a student failing to qualify for entry to university and having to accept that and form a different life-plan; they think of someone being told, “You are going to lose your sight. There is nothing we can do to save it. You are just going to have to accept the loss”; they think of someone at last admitting that a marriage has ended and coming to terms with that by accepting it; and they may think of a person with a terminal illness accepting his or her approaching death. Like Paul Ricoeur, they think that “the yes of consent is always won from the no.”² To them, therefore, my statement that love is acceptance seems to mean that “I love you” means, in essence, “I will reluctantly accommodate myself to your existence,” or words to that effect; and with that, of course, they vigorously disagree.³

¹ Jules J. Toner says that “affective affirmation” is the essence or core of what he calls radical love (The Experience of Love, pp. 141-160; Love and Friendship, pp. 128-147). He means a volitional affective act which corresponds to intellectual affirmation, and this is what I call acceptance.


³ I once suggested to a minister of religion that the use of the word “take” in the marriage vows is strange and that instead of saying, “I, John, take you, Mary to be my wife,” it might be better for a groom to say, “I, John, give myself to you, Mary, to be your husband and I accept you as my wife.” He replied that while
In its simplest form, however, acceptance is being in favour of a being who or which is, from the first, judged to be good, as in the following story:

An unmarried man of thirty-five, who had lived in Australia all his life, went to work in Canada for a year. He met a woman there, they fell in love, and towards the end of the year they decided to get married. Back in Australia his parents, who for the last ten or more years had been wanting their son to get married, received this news with joy and, when the time came, flew to Canada for the wedding. While they were on their way the woman in Canada said to her fiancé: “I hope your parents will accept me.” The parents arrived in Canada, met her and immediately judged that she was a delightful person and just right for their son. They then promptly, effortlessly and enthusiastically accepted her, as she had hoped they would.

If we analyse this acceptance we see:

(1) It is in the heart, not the head; in philosophical terms, it is not intellectual but volitional.

(2) Unlike resigned acceptance, it is not preceded by opposition or abhorrence. The parents’ yes of consent was no won from a no.

(3) Acceptance presupposes the actuality of its object: if I accept a house, it is now there, and if I accept my coming death, it is now a fact that I am going to die. In this respect acceptance differs from the decision to make or do something, since that volition precedes the actuality of the thing or the action.

(4) Acceptance in its simplest form also presupposes value in the being who or which is accepted. A great number of authors say that all values are subjective and that we “bestow” on objects any value which they have, but this does not fit the facts of the above story, in which the parents did not bestow value on the Canadian woman; they saw that she was good, and had been good for some time, and because of this they chose to be in favour of her.4

4 Writing about love, Irving Singer distinguishes between “appraisal” and “bestowal.” In appraisal, he says, one assesses a being in terms of the needs which it can satisfy; in “bestowal” one creates value. Love, he says, is not appraisal but
(5) From the parents’ acceptance of their prospective daughter-in-law probably came many actions, but their acceptance of her was not in itself a decision to do anything. That is, acceptance is not a decision to perform an action.

(6) This is not to say that acceptance achieves nothing. In the above case, it produces a significant result in the hearts of the parents: whereas other parents are unhappy because they wish that their sons had married other women, these parents, thanks to their acceptance of their daughter-in-law, have no such wish and are inwardly content.

(7) The parents’ acceptance of their daughter-in-law is mature and dignified. This merits a section to itself.

Acceptance can be mature and dignified

In a certain family the father is never in favour of anything which was not his idea and which he did not arrange. If another member of the family suggests a trip, he never says, “What a good idea! Let’s go!” Instead, he invariably raises objections. If everyone else is in favour, he gives in, saying: “All right, if you insist, but it’s a bad idea,” and throughout the trip he complains continually. On such a trip one family member asked another, “Why is Dad so opposed to this trip?,” and the other replied: “Basically, because it wasn’t his idea.” At one time in this family the mother had been saying that the kitchen shelves needed to be repainted and the father had done nothing about it; then, one day when the parents were out, two sons did the job and did it well. When the parents came home and went into the kitchen the mother was delighted and grateful, but the father turned on his heel and left, saying that he had work to do in the garage, and when he came in later he refused to comment on what had been done—he could not find anything in it to criticise but he was unwilling to praise it. Deep down, this man feels that as head of the house he should be the maker of all decisions and the doer of all that needs to be done; to maintain

his position, then, he feels that he must oppose all decisions of other persons and that he must insist that anything done without his authority was a mistake. That is, he feels that of its nature acceptance, as I have defined it, entails loss of status and dignity.

If this attitude were to be extended from a father in his family to a person in the universe it would mean that in an ideal universe a person would be the origin of absolutely everything, in total control of all reality, and consequently needing to accept nothing whatever. For anyone who has this idea, acceptance should always be resisted because it always involves climbing down, giving in, surrendering; and while we cannot avoid sometimes exteriorly accepting things that did not spring from our initiatives, we should maintain our dignity in our own eyes by saying no to them in our hearts.

If one imagines that standing here is the father who went to Canada and who simply accepted his son’s marriage, not because it was a fait accompli but because it was a good thing, and who accepted his son’s fiancee because he could see that she was a good person; and standing there is the father who went unwillingly on the trip and was grimly silent about the newly painted shelves; and if one asks which of these two men was mature and dignified; the answer has to be: the one who went to Canada. More generally, whenever we see that someone or something has value as it is, it is entirely reasonable and dignified on our part to choose to be in favour of it, to consent to it or to accept it.

Resigned acceptance

I said above that acceptance in its simplest form presupposes value in the being who or which is accepted—in this acceptance one sees that a being is good, already, and for that reason chooses to be in favour of him, her or it. There are, however, times when, in order to obtain peace of soul, persons accept bad things. Someone, for example, finds that he is going blind, he goes to a doctor and is told that nothing can be done to stop this, he goes to another doctor and is told the same thing, he tries folk remedies and meditation without success, he rages against God or fate, and ultimately he decides that instead of being
unhappy for the rest of his life he will accept blindness and so cause it to be only a practical problem, not a psychological one. This is resigned acceptance.

Resigned acceptance is sometimes weak and some individuals and peoples are rightly criticised for too quickly giving up when they encounter a difficulty and saying, “Oh well, it can’t be helped.” Also, it can be immoral inwardly to accept injustice or other moral evils—generally speaking, if we can do something about them, we should, and if we judge that we can do nothing about them we must nevertheless say “no” to them in our hearts. There are, however, times when resigned acceptance is strong and morally good, even noble. One sees this in sport, where if one person wins in a fair contest the loser is despised as immature or weak, a bad loser, if he refuses to accept the loss and to manifest this acceptance by congratulating the winner; and he is admired for strength of character if he accepts the result with a smile. Also, if someone is blinded in an accident and, after a period of black depression, comes to terms with his or her condition and accepts it, and if a person with terminal cancer accepts his or her coming death, they show strength and attain greatness. In all these situations acceptance is not lying down, grovelling and saying to fate, “Go on, beat me, do what you like to me, I won’t stop you, I give in.” On the contrary, the accepting person—the loser of the sporting contest, for instance—stands erect and maintains his or her dignity.

At times negative value judgements are used to obtain acceptance. “It’s only a game, it really doesn’t matter,” says the loser of the sporting contest to himself. “Who cares about going to university?,” says the person who failed to qualify, “I’ll be much better off in the real world.” “Who wants children, anyway?,” say the couple who have found that they cannot have children of their own and have been unable to adopt a child, “They are only a burden and when you have slaved for them for twenty years they up and leave you.” “What are a few more years of life worth?,” says the person who is going to die, “I’ll be glad to leave this mad, cruel world.” Truly dignified acceptance, however, maintains correct value judgements and, in cases such as those which I am now discussing, it is acceptance of what is clearly seen to be not good.

What the person attains through acceptance is inner peace. Instead of leaving the sporting contest sullen and angry, the good loser goes
home at peace with himself, the blind person of whom I talked earlier enjoys life, and the person who is going to die and who has accepted death enjoys life and radiates an inner peace.

In the course of this book I am going to discuss the acceptance of self in self-love, the acceptance by parents of their children and by children of their parents in parental and filial love, and I will say that essential to sexual love and friendship is the acceptance of one person by another. All these acceptances, I will say, are primarily the acceptance of good; they usually involve, secondarily, the resigned acceptance of things which in themselves are not good.

Acceptance of being

Louis Lavelle says:

> At the heart of freedom is an act of acceptance, a yes that we give to being and to life. It is the awareness [and, more than awareness, acceptance] of our participation in the great All within which our birth has occurred and our development proceeds. We keep saying this yes…. This acceptance is always present in us, even when we do not formulate it.⁵

In a similar way, Hans Küng talks of “trust in being.”⁶ A person, he says, may trust or distrust particular people; he may live trustfully or distrustfully in a particular country; and beyond that he may trust or distrust being. Without this trust, he says, a person necessarily lives in dread; with it, he or she lives with an underlying confidence and with the joy of living, and it comes from the judgement that, fundamentally, reality is good and from the volitional acceptance of it. Küng does observe that “a fundamental trust in reality by no means excludes mistrust in a particular case and therefore is not to be confused with credulity or uncritical optimism.”⁷

---

⁷ Ibid., p. 439.
2 Self-love

Thomas Aquinas said in effect that all love involves one-ness, and that since a person is more one in himself than he can be one with anyone else, or since unity is higher than union on a scale of one-ness, therefore a person loves himself more than he loves anyone else. At times he said that this is what we necessarily do; at other times he said that it is what we should do—a person, he said, is obliged in charity to love himself more than his neighbour.\(^8\) That is, he saw self-love as primary, and as obligatory in a very fundamental way.

At the opposite extreme, other authors have said that love involves union of persons, in the plural, which implies that self-love is impossible. For instance, John McTaggart said in 1927 that “while it is essential to love that it should be felt towards a person, it is also essential that it should be felt towards another person.”\(^9\)

A more moderate view is that our hearts are like dynamos, capable of producing a limited wattage of love, and while we should keep some love for ourselves we should strictly limit the amount, so as to have plenty for others. The good person, according to this view, loves himself or herself only a little, and others very much. Another view is that, like ambition, self-love is good in strict moderation but vicious in excess. Sin, according to this view, springs from excessive self-love, or from self-love that is not controlled by reason.\(^10\) The proposers of these views say in small voices that self-love is permissible and even that it is necessary and good; but they are highly suspicious of it and they see far more need to restrain than to encourage it.

---

\(^8\) *Summa Theologica*, 2-2 26 4 ad 2.


\(^10\) De Finance, for instance, says that hatred for others or for God is only the expression of a love of self; self-love, he says, is “in itself good,” but in this case “it is not ruled by reason” (*Connaissance de l'être*, p. 192.)
In recent times, however, psychologists have observed that when people are selfish and greedy, when they do not love their spouses or children or indeed anyone else, or when they are almost paralysed by lack of self-confidence, the root of their trouble is that they love themselves too little or not at all. Erich Fromm expressed this very clearly in “Selfishness and Self-Love” (1939) and in *The Art of Loving* (1956), a book which had a great circulation in several languages. The idea reached people involved in education and the upbringing of children and it is now generally accepted.

**That self-love is in essence self-acceptance**

I said earlier that in its primary form acceptance is an immediate consent to something which is judged to be good, and self-love is in essence acceptance of this kind. It is a person’s being in favour of his own existence, as opposed to wishing that he had never been born, or wanting to die soon so as not to have to put up with himself any longer; and it is a person’s being, in general, in favour of his own nature, as opposed to wishing that he was radically different. It is an abiding attitude which might be expressed in words like these: “I’m here! And I’m like this! Hooray!.”

Self-love, then, is not synonymous with self-interest, even “enlightened self-interest.” If we love any being we naturally defend it if it is threatened, and if the need arises we may do something to benefit it; but to say that we love the being does not mean that we act in these ways—it means primarily that we are in favour of the being as it is. If, then, we love ourselves, as a rule we defend ourselves if we are threatened and if we need something we obtain it; but our self-love is primarily self-acceptance, and the pursuit of our own interest is secondary.

More significantly, self-love is not synonymous with selfishness. I take selfishness to mean the deliberate pursuit by a person of his or her own interest, in an unfair way, at the expense of others. If, for example, food has been prepared for six people which will be just enough for each of them if it is evenly shared, it is not selfish of any of them to take
his or her fair share; but if one of them takes more than that, so that others go short, that is selfish. Selfishness, then, is a vice or character defect, which self-love is not.

What the self is

Some writers say that the self, the person or the “I” is the soul or the mind. One is one’s mind, they say, and one has (but is not) one’s body. John Donne said of “our bodies”:

They are ours, though they are not we. We are
The intelligences [minds], they the spheres.11

More recently (in 1969) H. D. Lewis said that “a person is his mind in a way in which he is not his body” and “my body is not something that I am but something that I have.”12 In some schools of psychology, the “I” or (as it was called in English) the Ego is not even the whole mind or psyche but one of its several elements, between the Superego and the Id. Maritain and others talked of the person as a “spiritual centre” which seems to have, but not to be, the mind, the body and their parts and powers. It is, however, more reasonable to say that the self, the person or the “I” is the whole (intelligent) being, and that one has one’s mind and body not in the way that one has a car but rather in the way that a car has an engine and a chassis, that is, in the way that a whole has its parts. H. D. Lewis and Borden Parker Bowne, on the principle that if you have a metal car that does not make you metal, said that when you have a bald head or a visible body that does not make you bald or visible—“Strictly speaking, I am not bald,” said Lewis13 and “We ourselves are invisible,” said Borden Parker Bowne.14 But if Lewis had no hair on his head he was bald and Bowne himself was visible. Similarly, if someone kicks my shin he kicks me and if people kiss my face they kiss me. This means, by the way, that while

11 Donne, “The Ecstasy.”
13 Ibid., p. 151.
14 Bowne, Personalism, p. 268.
I can properly talk about my mind or my will or my body, I cannot properly talk about “my person” or “my I,” and instead of saying that I love someone else’s person I should say that I love someone else as a person.

In self-love, then, a person, who is the whole intelligent being, accepts himself as a whole and his various parts and qualities. If, for instance, he accepts his physique, it is not a question of a mind accepting a body as a man might accept a car; it is a question of a person, with mind and body, accepting an aspect of himself.

Everyone has physical defects of one kind or another, either serious or, like baldness or a tendency to put on weight, fairly unimportant; everyone has inabilities, like being unable to sing, to remember names or to speak Spanish; some people stutter or are left-handed; and everyone has a psychological problem such as shyness, insecurity or something more serious. Complete self-love exists when a person accepts, however reluctantly, his or her defects or limitations and so becomes reconciled to them. If, for instance, a man hopes to obtain a doctorate and eventually a lectureship but is told that he is not bright enough for doctoral work, it may be difficult for him to admit that this is true and, having admitted it, to accept it; but if he accepts his limitation, abandons his ambition to become a lecturer, finds work that he can do well and commits himself to it wholeheartedly, he loves himself and is content to be the kind of person he is. It is wrong to interpret this as abject surrender to fate: it is dignified.

The fruits of self-love

By loving himself a person gives himself the inner peace which comes from the coincidence of will and reality. If, for example, a person cheerfully accepts his own nature as an animal being who eats, drinks, sleeps, is a sexual being and has instinctive reactions and desires, then he is quite happy to be such a being and he enjoys food and drink, he eats well, he sleeps well, he is not prudish or excessively fastidious about bodily functions and he is not easily disgusted by sights and smells associated with sickness. That is, he is not in the least upset if
he is suddenly made more aware than usual of the fact that we are, as the ancients used to say when they defined man as the rational animal, animals. Also, if a man accepts that he is a man and a woman accepts that she is a woman they are both happy with their natures in that respect. If white people accept their whiteness and black people their blackness, if middle-aged people accept no longer being young and elderly people accept what comes with growing old, they are at one with themselves voluntarily; they are themselves. Finally, if people have defects—whether superficial, like baldness, or important, like deafness—and accept them, they are happy within themselves and while their defects may cause practical difficulties they are not psychological problems which rob them of peace.

Also, Rollo May says that “it is self-assertion that gives the staying-power and depth to one’s power to be,” and self-love gives a person the confidence, the energy and the strength which he or she needs to be creative and enterprising and to have stamina. This is what educators have found: that if you want children to grow up to be adults who are capable of achievement to the measure of their ability, you must see to it that they develop “a positive self-image” and a strong self-love.

Moreover, self-love is necessary for joy of living and though people who despise themselves sometimes adopt a self-mocking and self-destructive pose, and make bitter jokes against themselves and the world, the kind of humour that is friendly and relaxed needs self-love.

Finally, far from being an obstacle to love of others, self-love is necessary for it. Ecclesiasticus says:

If a man is mean to himself, to whom will he be good?
He does not even enjoy what is his own.
No one is meaner than the man who is mean to himself. (Si 14:4-5.)

Commenting on the commandment, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” Augustine said: “First see if you have learned to love yourself.... For if you have not yet learned to love yourself, I am afraid that you will cheat your neighbour as yourself,” or be as mean to your

---

neighbour as you are to yourself. Kierkegaard said: “If anyone, therefore, refuses to learn from Christianity how to love himself in the right way, he cannot love his neighbour either.”\textsuperscript{17} Rollo May says: “That a basic love for ourselves is necessary if we are to love others, has now been proved beyond any doubt.”\textsuperscript{18} Toner says: “Do we not find that those who fail to love themselves fail to love anyone else?”\textsuperscript{19} Finally, writing of friendship and quoting Aristotle, Graham Little says that “to approve a friend, we must first approve ourselves,” that “a strong interest in oneself, far from being an impediment to friendship, is the first qualification for it” and that “the man who can’t be alone, who is ‘not even amicably disposed towards himself, cannot make friends.”\textsuperscript{20} If, then, someone does not love others, the reason is unlikely to be that he loves himself too much; it is more likely to be that he does not love himself enough.

**Self-rejection**

Some people have defects or limitations the existence of which they refuse to admit, and so you find people who cannot sing insisting on “singing,” people who are not well informed pontificating like experts and people who physically are not very strong straining every muscle to keep up with others in feats of endurance and pretending afterwards that they are not tired. Other people are conscious of their limitations but refuse to consent to them—for example, against their wills they have grown old and they resent having the weaknesses of old age.

It is possible to accept or love a being as a whole while refusing to accept some fairly minor element of him, her or it. One can, for instance, love a city without ever reconciling oneself to its winter, during which every year one complains; it is possible to love a country while deploring and being constantly irritated by the inefficiency of its inhabitants; and parents can love their teenage children but

\textsuperscript{17} Kierkegaard, \textit{Works of Love}, part 1, chap. 2A, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{18} May, \textit{Power and Innocence}, pp. 138-139.
\textsuperscript{19} Toner, \textit{Love and Friendship}, p. 129.
\textsuperscript{20} Little, \textit{Friendship}, p. 12.
resolutely refuse to accept their untidiness or the rock music with which they fill the house. Just so, it is possible for people to love themselves but not in their entirety: their self-love is then real but incomplete. On the other hand, it is also possible to detest a city because of its winter or a country because of its inefficiency; it is possible to be hostile towards other persons, taken as wholes, because of things in them to which one objects; and people can turn against themselves in a radical way because of defects in themselves. Georges Bernanos says: “How easy it is to hate oneself”; Camus says that “man is the only creature who refuses [who can refuse] to be what he is”; and Wojtyła says that “in his mind, man, as we well know, may reject the value of his own existence and substitute negation in the place of affirmation.” All these authors are saying that radical self-rejection, radical refusal of self, or self-hate, is psychologically possible.

Partial self-rejection, or the refusal by a person to accept some aspect of himself, involves a partial non-coincidence of a person as subject with himself as an objectively real being: the image in his mind of himself as he wants to be does not match the image he has of himself as he actually is. This makes for tension, discontent and hostile envy.

Radical self-rejection is even worse. It involves intense bitterness and unhappiness. Moreover, just as, if one hates other persons, virtually everything about them gets on one’s nerves, one feels angry if they score a success or if anyone praises them, and one is delighted if harm befalls them; so, if persons hate themselves almost everything about themselves gets on their nerves, they feel angry if they succeed in anything or if anyone praises them, they are delighted if harm befalls them or if their enterprises fail, and if they are suddenly invited to a party their immediate inclination is to say no, they cannot come, and so to deprive themselves of enjoyment. They are their own worst enemies, constantly doing themselves harm. Some of their naïve acquaintances may admire their spirit of self-denial, but in their case it is perverse.

21 Bernanos, Diary of a Country Priest, p. 314 (the end of the diary).
22 Camus, The Rebel, p. 11.
24 Jack Dominian says of people who feel that they do not deserve love: “They cannot overcome their feelings of badness. As a result they choose a spouse who does not
Their behaviour towards other people may take different forms. Despising themselves, they may expect others to despise them, too, and invite rejection. They may seek to give some meaning to their lives by being tremendously busy for others, whom they do not allow to do anything for them in return, and they may attach themselves to an overpowering leader or join an organisation which swallows them whole, and be completely dominated and ruthlessly used: they then feel that they are being treated as they deserve. Finally, they may seek to compensate for their lack of inner goodness by obtaining external goods, and so be acquisitive, selfish and mean. Erich Fromm has said that if we observe a selfish person closely, “we find that this type of person is basically not fond of himself but deeply dislikes himself,” and, he says, “the selfishness is rooted in their very lack of fondness for oneself.” Selfishness, then, is not excessive love of self, or even disordered love of self. It is not love of self at all. Erich Fromm says:

Selfishness and self-love, far from being identical, are actually opposites. The selfish person does not love himself too much but too little; in fact he hates himself.

We shall see in the course of this book that most of the deviations from true love spring ultimately from self-rejection.

Self-love is free

Certain thinkers whom I shall discuss in the next chapter maintain that self-love is universal and necessary, and they derive all other

---

25 See below, p. 78.
27 Ibid.
28 Fromm, The Art of Loving, p. 47.
volitions from it. If, however, self-hate is possible they are mistaken. Some contemporary psychologists say that if parents love their children whole-heartedly these grow up to become psychologically healthy self-loving adults, whereas if parents do not love their children these grow up feeling unworthy of anyone’s love, even their own, and so they refuse to love themselves; and these writers make it sound as though we have no choice. It seems more reasonable to say that the attitudes which, deep in their hearts, parents adopt towards their children cause the children to have a strong tendency towards either self-acceptance or self-rejection, self-love or self-hate, and that then choice comes in. One is, in the last analysis, free. The right choice, for love, often requires humility and a dash of humour; it may also require time. Indeed, as we go through life making discoveries about ourselves, which are not all good news, we have recurring crises of self-love and with each of them we may need time to reconcile ourselves to ourselves again.

Moral evil

I said a moment ago that some authors maintain that self-love, or excessive self-love, is a vice and the root of all immorality. As I have maintained in another book, however, moral evil involves not self-love but its opposite. Karl Barth says that sin is “at one and the same time a denial of God, a hatred of one’s fellow and self-destruction,”29 A. C. Bradley says of Macbeth that he “knowingly makes mortal war on his own soul,”30 and this is in the essence of all immorality.

If, then, a person is immoral, he cannot obtain peace of heart or unity within himself by accepting himself as such—by, for instance, saying, “I am dishonest, I accept that and so am at peace with myself,” as if dishonesty were like baldness. If he is deliberately dishonest, he is by his dishonesty taking action against himself as well as others and he is destroying himself; to accept this would reinforce self-rejection

29 Barth, Church Dogmatics, IV/1, # 60, p. 399.
30 Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 301.
instead of removing it. If a person is a sinner there is only one way to peace of mind and inner unity: repentance and reform of life.
3 The altruism debate

In the rest of this book I shall be discussing love of other people but before doing that I want briefly to look at the much-debated question of whether altruism is possible and whether, if possible, it is good.

The denial or rejection of altruism

Philosophical or Psychological Egoism is an individualistic theory of motivation according to which no one ever acts except in order to obtain some benefit for himself or herself. This means that if new people come to live near me, I accept them only in so far as I stand to gain some benefit from their presence and I do them favours only in order thereby to get something for myself; also, if you see people going to visit an old man, ask yourself what they have to gain by it and you will know why they are going. The idea is not new. Augustine said that we always do what seems to us at the time to offer us the greatest delight, and it pains me to report that Thomas Aquinas said in some places that “the aim of any agent is himself, for we do our deeds for ourselves”; he said that “if ever anyone does anything for anyone else, it is for his own benefit”; he even said that “if someone lays down his life for his friend, this does not happen because he loves his friend more than himself, but because in himself he prises the good of virtue

31 “Finis ultimus cuiuslibet facientis, inquantum est faciens, est ipsemet: utimur enim factis a nobis propter nos; et si aliquod aliquando propter alium homo facit, hoc refertur ad bonum suum, vel utile vel delectabile vel honestum” (Thomas Aquinas, Summa Contra Gentiles, 31770). As we will see, in other places Thomas stated a different view.
above physical well-being.”

Later Christians, including Bossuet, wrote on similar lines. In the seventeenth century Hobbes said that “of the voluntary acts of every man, the object is some good to himself,” and in the eighteenth century La Rochefoucauld gave the doctrine a worldly, cynical tone, saying: “We cannot love anything except in terms of ourselves, and when we put our friends above ourselves we are only concerned with our own taste and pleasure.”

With the discovery of evolution in the nineteenth century egoism acquired a scientific character, since according to this theory as it was then understood all living beings compete with one another for what they need to live and propagate and only the fittest survive and propagate, so that “natural selection” is operating all the time and there is continuous progress. Whereas Christians had been saying that a bountiful providence has given us what all of us need to survive, that if we all behave unselfishly there will be enough for everyone and that the rich should give generously to the poor, evolutionary theory seemed to say that nature sees to it that there is never enough to go round and that nature intends us not to take care of each other but to compete with each other for what we need and to keep what we get for ourselves, since those who miss out are meant by nature to die.

Michael Ghiselin expresses this idea better than I ever could:

“The economy of nature is competitive from beginning to end. Understand that economy, and how it works, and the underlying reasons of social phenomena are manifest. They are the means by which one organism gains some advantages to the detriment of another. No hint of genuine charity ameliorates our vision of society, once sentimentalism has been laid aside. What passes for cooperation turns out to be a mixture of opportunism and exploitation. The impulses that lead one animal to sacrifice himself for another turn out to have their ultimate rationale in gaining

32 “Quod aliquis vitam propriam corporalem propter amicum ponit, non contingit ex hoc quod aliquis plus amicum suum quam se ipsum diligist, sed quia in se plus diligist quis bonum virtutis quam bonum corporale” (Thomas Aquinas, In 3 Sent., 29 5 ad 3).

33 See below, p. 270.


35 La Rochefoucauld, Maxims, # 81, p. 45.

advantage over a third; and acts “for the good” of one society turn out to be performed to the detriment of the rest. Where it is in his own interest, every organism may reasonably be expected to aid his fellows. Where he has no alternative, he submits to the yoke of communal servitude. Yet given a full chance to act in his own interest, nothing but expediency will restrain him from brutalising, from maiming, from murdering—his brother, his mate, his parent, or his child. Scratch an “altruist,” and watch a “hypocrite” bleed.36

This theory of motivation—for that is what it is, not an ethics—has a certain appeal. First, it seems to be scientific, as opposed to airy-fairy, sentimental, philosophical or religious. Second, it implies that the world is like a giant Monopoly game, where every player’s single aim is to get all he or she can, at the expense of the other players, and this is simple and clear. Third, it is exhilarating to sweep aside hypocrisy and pretence and to reveal that the greatest saints, who are admired for their disregard for their own well-being, were in reality as self-seeking as anyone else, only out to satisfy wants in themselves which were perhaps a little unusual.

Ayn Rand believed that altruism is possible, but wrong.37 In two long didactic novels, The Fountainhead (1943, made into a successful film starring Gary Cooper in 1949) and Atlas Shrugged (1957), she maintained passionately that it is “dangerous and vicious nonsense”38 to say that “a man must think of the good of others before he thinks of his own”39 or that a man who owns a factory should run it primarily to benefit humanity. “The thing that is destroying the world,” says one of her characters, “is actual selflessness”40 and “the world is perishing from an orgy of self-sacrificing.”41 One is so used to hearing that the world would be a better place if people were more generous

Ayn Rand was born in Russia, went to the United States in 1926 and became a writer. Two novels which she wrote were huge successes, if one goes by sales, but after them she wrote no more novels. Instead, she and her disciples disseminated her philosophy, which she called Objectivism, in essays, addresses and courses. A collection of her essays is called The Virtue of Selfishness, and she meant it. A study of her philosophy, by William J. O’Neill, is appropriately called With Charity Toward None.

38 Rand, Atlas Shrugged, part 1, ch. 3, p. 58.
40 Ibid., ch. 18, p. 670.
that, when one reads Ayn Rand, it is hard to grasp that she is saying the exact opposite. Her heroes, whom her heroines admire and whom we are meant to admire, too, say: “I’m not interested in helping anybody. I want to make money”\footnote{Rand, \textit{Atlas Shrugged}, part 1, ch. 1, p. 29.} and “I work for nothing but my own profit.”\footnote{Ibid., part 2, ch. 4, p. 451.} When the encyclical \textit{Populorum Progressio} was issued in 1967, she said: “The Catholic Church is deserting Western civilisation and calling upon the barbarian hordes to devour the achievements of man’s mind.”\footnote{Rand, “Requiem for Man” in \textit{Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal}, p. 315.} Regrettably, her novels are still in circulation and, it seems, influential.\footnote{As part of an effort to diffuse her philosophy a series of books called The Ayn Rand Library is now being published.}

**The reality and goodness of altruism**

Other evolutionary scientists say that for evolution the unit which competes and survives is not the individual but the group. They go on to say that if there are two animal groups, in one of which the members help one another whereas in the other group the members are in perpetual conflict with each other, in time of trouble the first group will be more likely to survive than the second one. Therefore, they say, in the groups which are flourishing now we observe strong co-operative tendencies, which have been inherited and because of which these groups have survived. Human beings are such a group and Willard Gaylin says that “if there is one fact founded in his biology, essential to his survival, … it is that \textit{homo sapiens} is supremely a loving animal and a caring one.”\footnote{Gaylin, \textit{Caring}, p. 17.} Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt says that while man has aggressive tendencies, these “are counterbalanced by his equally deep-rooted social tendencies.”\footnote{Eibl-Eibesfeldt, \textit{Love and Hate}, p. 5.} He says that “the disposition towards intolerance and aggression is certainly innate in us,” but that “by nature we are also extremely friendly beings.”\footnote{Ibid., pp. 245-246.} And in \textit{The
Evolution of Love  Sydney L. W. Mellen says that evolution has produced in most of us an assortment of tendencies to form emotional attachments with others, which tendencies “can bring about altruistic behaviour as a by-product, not merely behaviour that looks altruistic but also behaviour that can be considered genuinely altruistic.”

If this is true, the social virtues are not entirely artificial, as opposed to natural; though the behaviour of small boys in playgrounds might suggest the opposite, we are not anti-social beings who have to be trained to suppress our natural inclinations and be kind to one another. Eibl-Eibesfeldt says: “It is not only conditioning that programs us to be good—we are good by inclination.” Adolf Portmann says: “Man comes to ‘sociability’ not by ‘arrangement’, by rational decision, but from the natural primary disposition which he shares with all higher animals,” and Gaylin says:

It [the tendency of human beings to be good to each other] cannot be a product of culture because no species constructed as peculiarly as man could have survived to a point of culture without possessing at its core a supremely loving nature. Rather, we must see our culture and our institutions as being derived from the caring aspect of our species’ nature. Civilisation is, at least in part, a form of crystallised love.

But is this true, scientifically speaking? Having moved from the individual organism to something larger, the group, evolutionary theory seems now to have moved in the opposite direction, to the gene, and to have declared it to be the unit of survival. To confuse the issue even further, a strong school of scientists vehemently denies the existence of inherited psychological tendencies of any kind; according to this school, we derive all our tendencies from the social conditioning we have received—which, since societies need their members to be cooperative, means in almost every case that we have generous tendencies. And when all is said and done we have free-will, which

50 Eibl-Eibesfeldt, *Love and Hate*, p. 5.
51 Portmann, *Animals as Social Beings*, p. 70.
52 Gaylin, *Caring*, p. 20.
means that whatever our inherited or induced tendencies may be they do not determine our behaviour.

Instead of trying to deduce something from a scientific theory of one kind or another, let us look at people’s behaviour and see whether they are sometimes or never altruistic. At this point the discussion is thrown into confusion by certain authors who define an altruistic action as one which is beneficial to another person and harmful to the agent. For instance, Edward O. Wilson defines altruism as “self-destructive behaviour performed for the benefit of others.”

According to these authors, if I go to visit a deaf old man to cheer him up my action is not altruistic unless I do myself positive harm by visiting him, or more harm than good. Others define an altruistic action as one whose only motive is the good of another being. Robert G. Hazo, for instance, says: “Disinterested benevolence: exclusive aim is to give”; if my primary aim is to give but I have a concurrent and secondary aim to get, my benevolence, he says, is not altruistic but “self-interested.”

According to these authors, if I visit an old man to cheer him up, knowing that he will be grateful to me, that others may hear about my visit and think well of me, and that when I leave him I will have the agreeable feeling which comes from doing a good deed, my action is not altruistic. If the term is defined in this way, some utterly unpremeditated actions might qualify as altruistic—for instance, if a woman saw a fire in the part of the house where her baby was and, thinking only of the baby and not at all of the acclaim of others or her own self-approval, rushed to rescue it, her action would meet the requirements—but almost no action performed by a person who had time to think could be altruistic, because it is virtually impossible to do something for another person without knowing that one will derive some benefit from it and at least in a secondary way expecting to receive that benefit. But how reasonable is it to define altruism in these ways? If there were always a conflict between the good of others and one’s own good, then if one were to act with any intention of

---

53 Wilson, *Sociobiology*, p. 578; *On Human Nature*, p. 213; my emphasis.

54 Hazo, *The Idea of Love*, p. 28; my emphasis. The word “disinterested” is now sometimes thought to mean “not interested,” as in “I am not interested in golf,” and for that reason I now avoid using it and use “altruistic” instead. Hazo uses it in the sense of “not seeking personal gain,” which is the older, and still the principal, sense.
obtaining good for oneself one would to that extent be seeking not the
good of another but his or her harm and one’s action would not be
wholly altruistic; an altruistic action would then be correctly defined
as one in which the agent seeks the good of another and not his own,
or even as one in which an agent intends to benefit another and harm
himself. But there is not always conflict between the good of others
and one’s own good; it is therefore more reasonable to define an
altruistic action as something which is done in the first place for another
being. It need not cause any pain to the agent; if, for instance, I give
some advice to a friend who asks for it, my action does me no harm
but is altruistic if my principal purpose is to help him or her. If I
secondarily or incidentally intend to benefit myself, this does not mean
that my action is not altruistic: if, for instance, I arrive on the scene of
an accident and give first aid, then leave when the ambulance comes,
and if I act primarily to save some people’s lives but knowing that I will
afterwards feel pleased with myself and incidentally intending this,
my action is altruistic.

Once that confusion has been cleared away, it is possible to look at
people’s behaviour and ask whether people ever do things primarily
for others. Of course, we cannot inspect other people’s motives and we
may not always be sure of our own, but we can estimate the plausibility
of the two competing views: that people are never, or that they are
sometimes, altruistic. Let us observe the small actions—like telling
someone that he has left his car-lights on—that people are performing
all the time, and ask: Is it likely that none of these actions is what it
seems, but that in all of them the agents are out to benefit themselves,
and only benefit others in order to benefit themselves? It seems highly
unlikely to me and, incidentally, if it were true we should stop
thanking people for favours they do us since they are not doing them
for us. Let us then think of how in times of trouble people have helped
others at great cost to themselves. Iris Origo tells of an Italian peasant
who in 1943–44 sheltered on his farm four escaped English prisoners
of war, and she says: “Here is a man (and there are hundreds of others
like him) who has run the risk of being shot, who has shared his
family’s food to the last crumb, and who has lodged, clothed and
protected four strangers for over three months—and who now
proposes to continue to do so, while perfectly aware of all the risks that
he is running."55 A psychological egoist can say that this peasant acted out of enlightened self-interest, but this rings false because, for one thing, he was far more likely to be shot than rewarded for what he did. Nor was his action unique in human history, which has many stories of men and women helping others at great risk to themselves—and for the others, not primarily for some benefit to themselves.

What is a gift?

At this point I want to raise the question: What is a gift? Allow me to number the points as I make them.

(1) We can begin by saying that a gift is something which one person has possessed and which he or she causes to become the possession of someone else. If it is a material thing, it ceases to be the possession of the original owner; if, like information, it is not a material thing, the original owner both keeps it and gives it.

(2) Suppose that a man has something (information, let us say, or money) to which I have a right. If he passes it to me I may say that he “gave” it to me and out of politeness I may say, “Thank you,” but it is clear to us both that the thing is not a gift. This is why it would be wrong for a male employer at Christmas time to dress up as Santa Claus, wrap his employees’ Christmas bonuses (to which they are entitled) in gift wrapping and “give” them the cheques as if they were Christmas presents. A gift, then, is something which is passed to someone who does not have a right to it.

(3) If I am about to burn something as rubbish and another person says, “May I have that, please?,” I naturally let him or her have it but if you imagine yourself as either of the parties in this transaction you will, I believe, find that it is not experienced as the making and receiving of a gift. A gift must be something of value to the giver.

55 Origo, War in Val d’Orcia, p. 133. I have taken this from a book which I happened to be reading when I wrote this chapter—it is not as if I went looking far and wide for an example of altruism and eventually found this one.
(4) A gift is made to someone, and only an actually existing person is a someone; therefore a gift presupposes the existence of its recipient.

(5) Things bought, sold or exchanged are not gifts and therefore if I “give” you something in order to get something in return, my action is not giving. That is, giving is altruistic and to deny the possibility of altruism is to deny the existence of gifts.

(6) Suppose that I force something onto another person against his will, for his own good. Suppose, for instance, that a young woman wants to be entirely self-supporting and her father intercepts and pays her electricity bills; or suppose that people want to make a decision without help from me and that I, for their good, insist on telling them what to do: is this money or advice a gift? It seems to me that it is not, which means that something is a gift only when it is voluntarily accepted. (Willingness to accept can sometimes be presumed. If, for instance, someone is unconscious or for some other reason cannot be consulted, and if one does something for him believing that if he could be consulted he would agree to receiving it, one gives him help.)

We can, then, define a gift as something of value which one person causes to become the possession of someone else, who did not have a right to it and who voluntarily accepts it.

Aristotle said that giving implies superiority but receiving implies inferiority, and that for this reason a great-souled man confers benefits but hates to receive them.\footnote{Aristotle, \textit{Nichomachean Ethics}, book 4, chap. 3, 1124 b 10-19.} Well, it can be humiliating to be given things out of pity—Max Scheler said that “in the absence of love for a person, the expression of pity for him will be felt, even by the pitier himself (if he is morally sensitive), to be an act of brutality”\footnote{Scheler, \textit{The Nature of Sympathy}, part I, chap. 11, p. 147.}—or to be “given” people’s cast-away things and to have to take them out of sheer need; it can be degrading for a person to accept a “gift” as a bribe to keep quiet: in such situations great-souled persons might stand on their dignity and refuse the “gifts,” saying that they would rather starve than accept them. But a genuine gift is totally different. For example, when two great-souled persons are friends, either can buy the other a drink without establishing superiority over him, and the other can accept it appreciately, gratefully, and not with inferiority or subservience but with dignity.
Altruism and the mutuality of love

I shall later say that as a rule when one person loves another he or she desires to be loved in return. What comes first here is the love for the other: that is, a person does not love another in order to be loved in return; rather, because one person loves another he or she desires to be loved by him or her. If, then, people do things for other people whom they love, they act primarily for them and their love and actions are altruistic.

The thesis of this book

The motive for altruistic behaviour is love, and my contention in this book is that there are two different kinds of love of others, each of which has two species.

One kind of love comes into existence when a person sees that he or she is linked to another person in some way and because of this link loves the other person. For instance, parents see that, as a matter of physical fact, certain beings are their children and because of this they love them; when the children are old enough to understand, they see that certain adults are their parents and primarily because of this they love them. In this kind of love the link exists prior to the love and is the reason for it. It has two species. The first species is between unequals and its primary forms are parental and filial loves; other forms are the loves between uncles or aunts and their nephews or nieces, the love between teachers and students, the love between doctors or nurses and their patients, and other loves where the very basis of the relationship entails inequality. The other species (of the first kind of love) is love between equals. Its primary form is the love between brothers and sisters; other forms are the love between comrades, co-workers, fellow-countrymen and so on. In Love and the Person I called this kind of love cosmic love, but I now call it solidarity-love. This is not, perhaps, a felicitous expression, but can you think of a better one?
The other kind of love is between persons who until they love one another are not linked together in any special way. It has two species: sexual love and friendship. For a reason which will appear later, I call this “ecstatic love.”
Part 2

Solidarity-love
Having children

Some people have children unintentionally or even against their will but others, probably most of those who become parents, choose to have children. Why? Some people have children for their own material gain, in the form of help on a farm or around a house, care in old age or welfare payments; some lonely and unloved girls have babies because they want beings who will cling to them and to whom they will matter, and some men and women who feel that they are failures have children in the hope of achieving vicariously what has eluded them in their own lives: but none of these motives can be taken seriously as an explanation of the whole immense work in which the human race is engaged, the having and bringing up of children.

Goodness distributes itself

Thomas Aquinas said that “goodness distributes itself” and in this is contained, I believe, the deepest explanation of why people have and bring up children. In so far as beings are have-nots, Thomas said in effect, they have an acquisitive drive or are getters; in so far as they are haveves, however, they have a distributive drive or are emitters.58 God,

58 “Res enim naturalis non solum habet naturalem inclinationem respectu proprii boni, ut acquirat ipsum cum non habet, vel ut quiescat in illo cum habet; sed etiam ut proprium bonum in alia diffundat secundum quod possibilis est. Unde videmus quod omne agens, in quantum est actu et perfectum, facit sibi simile. Unde et hoc pertinet ad rationem bonitatis, ut bonum quod quis habet alii communicet secundum quod possibilis est.” (Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, 1 19 2 c.) “Unumquodque autem ex hoc agit quod actu est. Agendo autem esse et bonitatem in alii diffundit. Unde et signum perfectionis est alicuius quod simile possit producere.” (Summa Contra Gentiles, 1 37.) “Natura cuiuslibet actus est ut seipsum communicet, quantum possibilis est” (De Potentia, 2 1).
who has everything, is a pure emitter; a being which had absolutely nothing, if there could be such a thing, would be a pure getter; we and other creatures who and which are between these extremes have two basic drives and are partly emitters, partly getters. For instance, human beings who are in a place and know nothing about what is going on are intensely curious and want to get information; those who know almost everything about a subject tend to broadcast their knowledge, for instance by writing or teaching; and those who are in between talk and listen to one another, enjoying both the emitting and the getting of information. When Thomas looked at the universe, then, he did not see all beings seeking only their own benefit; instead, he saw more or less developed beings pouring out goodness and deficient beings taking in what they needed. Those, like the Psychological Egoists, who see only the acquisitive drive in beings and maintain that in the last analysis every being pursues its own benefit only, maintain that the ultimate truth about human society is that whenever human beings are together there is conflict; Thomas saw peace as the normal situation, as haves give willingly to have-nots.

If Thomas was right, it is in accord with a law of being that needy human beings, such as children, seek to obtain what they need, clamourously demanding it when they are babies, asking for it nicely when they are older, but always taking more than they can give; and it is also in accord with this same law that when human beings reach maturity they desire to “emit” the goodness that is in them by having children. That is, when people want to have children the expansionary tendency of being itself is at work in them.

This implies that the desire to have children springs up most strongly in persons when they judge themselves to be good, love themselves and so feel that what is in them ought to be “emitted.” It also implies that the having of children is, ideally and also often in practice, altruistic. It is, then, spiritual.

59 Above, pp. 35-38.
Instinct

In ordinary parlance now, the word “animal” is restricted to horses, cats, elephants and so on and not used of human beings, insects, birds or fish. It is therefore an insult to call a human being an animal, and people object to “being treated like animals.” For this reason, many people object to the statement that human beings have instincts, or behavioural tendencies inherited from our animal ancestors. In an old-fashioned way, I shall in this book use the word “animal” of human beings as well as of what I will call “other animals,” and I shall assume that, like all animals, human beings have instincts.

Sometimes our instincts cause us to act involuntarily, without even thinking. A person, for instance, walking near the ocean suddenly finds himself or herself on the edge of a cliff and instinctively steps back or reaches for something to hold on to. At these times we act like all animals. We are, however, different from other animals in that we have intellects and free will. In particular, we make judgements about whether it would be right, or anyway better, to do or not do something that we find ourselves instinctively tending to do.

Sometimes there is no conflict whatever in us between spirit and sense and we judge that what we find ourselves instinctively tending to do is absolutely the right thing to do, and we do it with gusto. Someone, for instance, walking in the bush on a hot day, grows thirsty and comes across a pool of clear water. A dog in the same situation would run to the pool and drink, this person’s instinct is to do the same, he or she quickly judges that it would be a good thing to do and, presto, it is done.

At other times a man finds himself instinctively wanting to do something which at a higher level he wants not to do and then, if all goes well, by his free will he dominates his instinct and does not do what instinctively he felt inclined to do, or he does the opposite. For instance, the man in the example I gave above knows that the pool is contaminated and (as we say) he resists the urge to drink from it. When an instinct is pulling us one way and our judgement is pulling us another way, it is often difficult for us to follow our judgements. But we should.
It is arguable that as an individual human being develops, increasingly in him or her the spirit dominates the senses, and as whole countries become more civilised the behaviour of their citizens comes to be less and less determined by uncontrolled instincts and more and more in accord with properly rational judgements, which sometimes express approval of the instinctive tendency, at other times disapproval of it, and by free will. We shall see many examples of this. Many people now object to talk of instincts because they believe that if you accept instincts you will end by justifying racism, sexism, militarism and other social evils; but to say that racist and other behaviour is to some extent instinctive does not justify it.

The reproductive instinct

Some scientists maintain that in any animal species, those members which have a strong reproductive instinct naturally have many offspring, which inherit this instinct and so go on to have many offspring in their turn, whereas members with a weak reproductive instinct have few offspring, which in turn have few offspring, with the result that in every existing animal species, a strong reproductive instinct is universal. A process of selection has thus brought it about that from the first moment of our lives normal human beings are programmed to want to have children when we reach maturity. If, then, at a certain age a hitherto childless woman quite suddenly begins to feel a persistent desire to have children, this probably springs from her animal nature where a kind of clock has been ticking over and now makes her feel this need. The feeling can be quite irrational, as instinctive feelings often are, and, driven by such a feeling, women sometimes become irrationally depressed when they see no prospect of having a child, or they are prepared to do almost anything to have a child. Some women have even stolen other women’s children, so desperate were they.

Where I differ from the scientists whom I quoted at the beginning of this section is that I do not accept that the desire to have children is purely instinctive, or merely animal, in us. The reproductive instinct
in other animals is the diffusiveness of being manifesting itself in them at their level; the desire to have children in human beings is instinctive, since we, too, are animals; but we are not beasts, which in all they do are driven by instinct; we are both spiritual beings and animals and this desire in us is spiritual as well as animal and our actions in this regard are free: whereas hunger and tiredness are usually purely animal experiences, and intellectual curiosity is purely spiritual, the desire to have children engages our entire natures.

The influence of society

Other scientists, who deny the existence of instincts, believe strongly in the power of social conditioning. According to them, for its survival every human society needs children, and it therefore conditions its members to think that having children is both marvellous and necessary. It does this by showering approval on people when they have children, by saying over and over again that babies are lovable and children a delight, by giving little girls dolls to play with, by assuming, when talking to children, that when they grow up they will have children of their own, and by insinuating that people, especially women, who do not want children are unnatural. And so, it is said, people have children because they have been socially conditioned to do so.

I do not deny that human beings are “pressured” or “conditioned” by society to want to have children, or at least encouraged to have children. Societies do promote human reproduction, if only by fêting people when a child is born to them. What I deny is that the desire to have children is purely social in its origin, or that it is put into people from outside them, more or less in the way that an advertising campaign can make a lot of people feel that they must have something which, left to themselves, they would have never have felt the slightest need for. Here as in other matters, society manifests its approval of something that most human beings would do, anyway.
Are children *given* existence?

We may be tempted to imagine that possible human beings are in a sort of waiting-room, and that every day some of them are called, given existence, and sent into our world. In some plays and in the Hoffmansthal-Strauss opera, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, troops of unconceived children are shown wandering around in a shadowy world, pathetically hoping to be given life, like children in an orphanage who hope that some nice couple will come along and adopt them. There is, however, no such waiting room and possible human beings do not have identities. This means, first, that if people could have a child and decide not to have one, they do not keep someone out of existence. It means, second, that because, as I said above, a gift presupposes the existence of its recipient, when people decide to have a child and have one, they do not, properly speaking, give existence to a person. More concisely, my parents did not *give* life to me because until I existed there was no “me” to whom they could give it, and once I existed they could not give it to me because I had it.

---

60 Above, p. 43.
5 Parental love

If someone becomes a parent against his or her will and, when the child is born, maintains this attitude and, looking at the child, says, “I wish that this thing did not exist”; if someone wants a son, gets a daughter, and wishes that she had never come into existence; if, at a later stage, a child is unintelligent and his parents, regarding him as unworthy to be their child, wish that he had never been born or that he would do them the favour of dying; then these parents hate their children, even if they feed, clothe and house them. If parents are indifferent to whether their children exist or not, they may not hate their children but they do not love them, either. When, however, a child is born to parents who wanted one, they are usually deliriously happy and a flood of emotion surges up in their hearts and is poured into the child as they hold him, fondle him, hold him at arm’s length to look at him, then hold him close. The child, so small, is infinitely dear to them. This is parental love in its earliest phase and it consists in the volitional acceptance of the child, because of the link which exists with him or her.

Love is not of its nature an “all or nothing” thing and occasionally parents find it difficult to accept something about their child which comes to them as an unpleasant surprise. Fair people, who without giving the matter much thought had assumed that their children would be fair, may be taken aback when they have a child who is dark-skinned and on first seeing him or her they may involuntarily draw back. At a somewhat later stage people may discover that their child is deaf or retarded and at first be angry about this. At this early stage the parents love their children, there is no doubt about that, but not everything about them. For them to love their children completely they must accept these things and if, for instance, people have a deaf child and accept his deafness they are able to talk about it without becoming emotionally upset, they do not mind hearing other parents
talking about their children’s love of music, and the child grows up knowing that he or she is loved completely. The problem can arise at a still later stage, for instance when highly educated parents discover that their child is of only average intelligence, or when a sport-loving man at last realises that his son is never going to be good at any sport. For these parents to love their children completely, they must accept their limitations. Such acceptance can be difficult, and in the beginning it can involve a wrench as expectations which had meant a great deal are voluntarily given up, but thereafter there is peace of soul and complete love.

I am making too much of the difficulties which are sometimes experienced by parents in loving their children. Almost always, loving themselves, and seeing the connection between their children and themselves, parents joyfully accept them and love them with great affection as soon as they see them and for ever after. As Paul Claudel says, “The father sees his children outside himself, and knows what was deposited in him,”61 and, rejoicing to have it in himself, he loves his child who has it, too. When children are born the will to have children becomes love of existing children, and as the will to have children springs from self-love, so does love of children. The general rule, that self-love is necessary for love of others, is verified here.

What parents usually do

Generally speaking, people not only instinctively want to have children but, when their children are born, they involuntarily feel strong affection for them. They freely consent to these feelings, they freely accept their children, and at that point they love them. Parents have no choice about whom they will love with parental love, but they do exercise free will about whether to love their children or not.

They also accept responsibility for their children and, when their children are babies and later, provide, as far as they can, whatever is necessary for a good life. They feed, wash and dress their children.

61 Claudel, L’annonce faite à Marie, version pour la scène, Act I; Claudel, Théâtre. 2,158.
What they do later depends in practice on where and how they live: for instance, middle-class parents in Australia provide shoes for their children, and later tennis racquets if all the children in their circle have them, whereas many parents in other societies do not provide shoes, let alone tennis racquets. They also see to it that their children obtain at least a good secondary education.

When their children are small, parents usually hold them, hug them, carry them about and talk to them, and it seems that children need this. Moreover, when children are babies, their parents take charge of them; when, a few years later, they are infants and able to speak, their parents tell them what to eat, what to do and not do and when to go to bed; and when they are teenagers their parents tell them whether they may go out or not and by what time to be home. Thus parents assume authority over their children and it is not as though they have two distinct relationships with their children, one of authority and the other of love: there is one relationship, which is of both love and authority.

Of all these activities, the most important is love. Indeed, if this is lacking the provision of necessities will be useful but not greatly appreciated and the exercise of authority will probably be resented, whereas often the authority exercised by excessively strict parents is accepted by children who know that their parents love them.

The obligations of parents and the rights of children

Parents have a certain obligation to love their children and children have a right to their parents’ love. If, then, a man who wanted a son has a daughter instead, becomes angry to the point of wishing that she did not exist, and voluntarily maintains that inner attitude towards

62 R. A. Spitz reported in 1945 on the cases of babies who were fed and cared for in the usual way for three months and then put in a foundling home where there was hygiene and medical care but no one played with them or talked to them. Most of the time they just lay in separate cots with opaque partitions between them. In the first year 30% died and most of the others were very retarded in their development. This is reported in Lidz, The Person, pp. 155-156.
Part 2 Solidarity-love

her, he does her a serious injustice even if he provides her with home, food, clothes and schooling. If a boy, as he grows up, turns out to be different from his father and if when this becomes apparent his father loses interest in him and adopts a detached, indifferent attitude towards him, he, too, is unjust. And if a child has a defect of some kind which is not his fault, his parents do him an injustice if, refusing to accept it, they love him incompletely.

Children also have a right to whatever is necessary for a good life, so far as the parents can provide it. Every child has a right to food, shelter and some measure of education, if the parents can provide these things, but beyond that what a child is entitled to depends in practice on where and how his or her parents live. This means, for instance, that if a middle-class man in Melbourne loses so much money gambling that he is unable to provide his children with things that in their circle are necessary for the good life of a child, or if a divorced man does not contribute enough to the support of his children, he does them an injustice. Legally, he may be within his rights; morally, he is not. All of this means that, like life itself, the necessities of life are not, strictly speaking, gifts from parents to their children.

At times, it is true, a parent may be excused from this or that obligation which normally falls on parents. For example, a physical or psychological disorder may make it impossible for a man or woman to do what parents usually do, and a man such as a ship’s officer, whose work takes him away from home for long periods, is not as a rule obliged, if he has children, to give up his job. Also, in certain circumstances a woman who has a child may (rightly or wrongly) judge that it would be best for all concerned if she gave up the child for adoption. In these cases the parent is normally obliged to see to it that the child will be well cared for as he or she grows up.

When I say that at times a parent may be excused from a parental obligation, I mean that a good reason is necessary. One has read of upper-class families a century or so ago where the children were looked after by nannies and rarely seen by their parents, and of parents who sent their sons to boarding schools, leaving it to the masters there to exercise authority over the boys, to teach them not only about history and geography but about sex and morality and religion, and to advise
them on what subjects they should study and hence virtually decide their future careers. Nannies and good schoolmasters are of course better than nothing, but the system was not a good one.

The altruism of parents

When parents accept their children, they do not say: “These beings will admire us and they will support us in our old age: therefore we are in favour of their existence.” They see their children as good in themselves, they provide them with those things to which they are entitled, and, simply because they love them, they give them much more. They may at times grumble at the loss of the freedom of movement which they used to enjoy, but if it were to be offered back to them in exchange for their children they would unhesitatingly refuse it; they may complain about the high cost of things which their children need, but this does not mean that they do not want to buy them. They may deprive themselves of things which they could reasonably have in order to provide for their children well; they may even, if necessary, risk their own lives in order to save their children’s lives.

If one person hands over to another something to which he is entitled, he does not put the other in his debt. Hence when parents supply their children with necessary things they do not put them in debt to them, and if in later life a man were to present to his grown-up son a bill for all the expenses of his upbringing, the son would be entitled to say: “You simply provided me with what I was entitled to. I owe you nothing.” If this seems unfair, it should be noted that each generation receives from the previous generation and pays out for the next one, and so comes out even. Moreover, when one person loves another and moved by love gives him something to which he is not entitled, he does not cause him to be indebted to him, because love does not keep accounts and a true giver does not add up the worth of his gifts and expect an equal amount to be returned to him. When, then, parents give things to their children out of sheer generosity, far beyond the demands of justice, they do not put their children more
and more deeply into debt to them and they ought never in later life to say things like: “We bought you a bicycle when we could not afford it. We deprived ourselves of holidays to send you to a private school. We spent a fortune on your teeth. You owe us something in return.” Parental love does not call in debts like this.

The benefits of parenthood

When they have children people feel that they have done something marvellous in producing the greatest kind of being that exists on earth, and they experience an exalted sense of achievement. They obtain a new appreciation of, and delight in, their own and each other’s bodies. They feel that they have participated in a wonderful natural process, and are at one with all nature. Moreover, they feel that when they die they will not vanish entirely from the earth but will live on in their children. For people who have no belief in an after-life, this can be of immense importance; but even people who believe in an after-life are happy to know that they will live on in this world as well as in another. Finally, as their children grow up, in looking at them, loving them and enjoying them, they grow in knowledge of themselves. This is true whether the child is of the same sex as the parent or not—Jean Guitton says that when a man has a daughter,

once femininity shows itself in the little girl (and this happens earlier than is thought), the father, contemplating this femininity … sees himself mirrored in a member of the opposite sex, and far from being upset at this, he smiles. Each of us has a recessive character of the sex he does not belong to; if he could know and develop it, he would realise his complete harmony, would become entirely united with himself and would be happy. A man needs to perfect himself in an image of himself that is a feminine being.63

5-Parental love

That parental love is physical

In saying that parental love is in essence acceptance, which is a volitional attitude, I may seem to have said that it is a purely spiritual experience, peculiar to human beings, but, like the desire to have children, it is both animal or instinctive and spiritual, and I shall now deal with the animal element in it.

First, in animals of every kind, where the young need care at the beginning, their parents or at least their mothers instinctively feed, protect, clean and in general nurture them. Our animal ancestors did this for their young, which needed care, and the instinct did not at once disappear when the first rational animals appeared, nor has it disappeared since then (why would it, since it is manifestly necessary for human beings to look after their young, who are helpless for a long time?). The protective and nurturing instinct is, therefore, most strong when children are babies and infants, which is why mothers and fathers are sometimes surprised by the sheer animal force of their feelings for their new-born or small children. Because instincts are in the animal part of our nature, at times this instinct causes people to behave, or to feel a strong urge to behave, in an irrational way, for instance by refusing to leave a hospital and go home and have some sleep. Commonly, as children grow up, the instinctive element in parental concern becomes less powerful, but I doubt whether it ever vanishes entirely.

Second, in the normal case the initial basis of the relationship is the physical fact that the child developed from a cell which was formed from the father’s sperm and the mother’s ovum and that during his first nine months he lived and grew in his mother’s womb.

Third, when people accept a baby, cuddle him and take care of him, especially if they believe that he is or is to become their own, “bonding” occurs. This seems to be instinctive. This is why great distress is caused when some time after their births it is discovered that two babies have been interchanged: on the one hand, the parents want their own flesh-and-blood children but on the other hand they are bonded to the children who were given to them by mistake and from whom it is therefore painful to be separated. This bonding is also why
adoptive parents are not so very different from natural parents: they, too, are instinctively linked with their children.

Fourth, children need to be fed, washed and dressed, and this care involves very physical experiences for both parents and children. When mothers breast-feed their babies, they feed them from their own bodies, in a sensuous way—and in so doing they establish an association between food and love.

Fifth, physical feelings are an integral element of parental love: parents feel physically elated when they look at their new-born babies, when they are reunited with their children after a long separation, or when one of the children scores a success of some kind; they feel nervous anxiety if one of their children is lost or ill, they are physically distressed if their child is in pain or dies, and they may even react physically to something that is happening to a child who is somewhere else. Also, they normally express their feelings in physical ways, by holding their children, hugging them, carrying them about and playing physically with them, and (as I said above) it seems that if children do not receive such expressions of love they do not develop and may even die.

Finally, Sydney L. W. Mellen said something which was once generally believed but has recently been generally denied, namely that a father’s love is as a rule less physical than a mother’s. He says that in evolution maternal love is much older than paternal love, which did not exist in the lower mammals and probably became genetically established in Plio-Pleistocene humans; cases of mothers who do not have maternal feelings for their children are far more rare than cases of fathers who do not have parental feelings; and paternal love tends to be less continuous, less round-the-clock, than maternal love.64

Quasi-parents

In various degrees and in different ways, certain people resemble parents and have a love for children which is paternal or maternal in character. Grandparents are sometimes surprised by the strength of their feelings, as Gaylin, who was used to observing others, discovered when he became a grandfather:

> The response I had personally experienced of almost instantaneous bonding on viewing my first grandchild shocked me with its rapidity and its irrationality, and impressed me with its chemical and automatic nature, so similar to animal bonding. It was such a profound and mysterious experience. I knew my entire sensibility had changed—that a new “me” existed—and it happened immediately… . A secret message had entered my nervous system, readjusting all the patterns of my consciousness. To the lifetime of experiences that had shaped my characteristic perceptions and behaviour, a new one had been added of such a magnitude that I would never be quite the same.65

Uncles and aunts, especially if they do not have children of their own, can feel strong love for nephews and nieces. Also, people like nannies (if they still exist), regular baby-sitters or friends of the parents who often help with the children can become quasi-parents, especially if they have no children of their own. Sometimes these quasi-parents are emotionally closer to the children than the parents are; but they do not become exactly the same as parents.

Some people become quasi-parents of older children or young adults, and this is most likely to happen if the older persons do not have children and if the younger persons are away from their families or if their parents are unable to understand what they are learning or doing. Good teachers, for example, whether at secondary school or university, at times become quasi-parents to some of their students. Also, a single middle-aged woman who works in a city office may become a quasi-mother to a young man or woman from the country

who has come to work there, and the relationship may come to mean a great deal to both of them.

Finally, seriously ill and old people resemble children in helplessness and dependence, so that the doctors, nurses and others who look after them treat them in a way which resembles the way in which parents treat their children, and they often come to love them in a quasi-parental way.
6 Small sons and daughters: how they love their parents and the benefits to them of being loved by their parents

A baby instinctively clings to his parents, who constantly hold him, cuddle him, talk to him and smile at him. He responds to their affection and care and if his response is not yet love, properly so called, it is the prelude to it. Filial love comes when the child reaches the age of reason and free will and in effect says to himself, “These are my parents and I accept them as such.” He wants them to go on showing their love for him in physical ways and he himself expresses his love for them by holding their hands, climbing on their knees and, when he is old enough to talk, asking them to come and see him when he is in bed; but an intelligent acceptance is now present which makes his attitude, taken as a whole, love.

At some stage a child may wonder whether he really is the child of the couple who claim to be his parents, and he may picture a rich and talented couple, for whom they are looking after him, returning to thank them, claim him and take him away to their palatial home. Ideally, after a time children who have such fantasies judge that the couple who look after them really are their parents, see that they are good and loving people, and accept them, abandoning the fantasies. Other children may be seriously tempted to judge that they are unlucky to have the parents they have and to envy children with richer, better-natured or more permissive parents. Ideally, these children, too, come round to accepting the parents whom they have. In cases such as these the children pass through their period of almost non-acceptance and arrive at an acceptance that is more intelligent, more free and more personal than it was before.
Even small children disobey their parents sometimes, and children continually endeavour to obtain more freedom than their parents give them, so that there is always conflict at the line dividing the permitted from the forbidden, but as a rule in accepting their parents children accept, in principle, their authority.

The benefits of having good parents and good relationships with them

When children have good parents, their physical needs are taken care of and they enjoy a certain material security. “Whatever happens,” they feel, “our parents will look after us.” Moreover, their emotional needs for affection, for being at times thrown about in an exciting way and at other times held close in a comforting way, for freedom at some times and restraint at others, are satisfied, and they are content.

They also see that they matter to these adult beings. This gives them a sense of their own worth and, seeing how their parents love them, they love themselves. This is virtually indispensable for all children but it is perhaps most obviously important when a child is handicapped. If, for instance, a boy is lame and his parents accept this and so love him completely, he for his part is greatly helped to accept his lameness with its unsightliness and inconvenience, and instead of being miserable about it he is happy. Also, when a son of highly intelligent parents is of limited intelligence, if the parents see the situation, come completely to terms with it in their minds and hearts, and loving their child accept his limitation, the child models his attitude towards himself on their attitude towards him and is happy to be as he is, instead of feeling that someone as stupid as himself has no right to exist.

How necessary parental love is for children is shown by the harm which is done to children by parents who reject them when they are small. Jack Dominian says that if parents reject a child—because they did not want a child in the first place, because they wanted a child of the other sex, because he does not measure up to their expectations, because taking care of him is more trouble than they had bargained on,
or for some other reason—the child blames himself instead of them for their rejection and feels worthless, a nuisance or bad.\textsuperscript{66} He therefore, from an early age, despises himself, and all the evil effects of self-rejection follow in due course. Marriage break-ups which occur when children are small can produce the same results. If, for instance, a man leaves his wife, their small children are likely to feel that he has left \textit{them} rather than her and that it is their fault. This can make them feel unworthy of love.

When children are well loved, they are able in due course to love others and to accept love from them. Gaylin maintains that this begins even in infancy: infants who are loved by their mothers and attached to them, he says, attach themselves to other people as well, and he goes on: “Some maintain that if there are no attachments during infancy or early childhood, there will be no possibility of forming sound later relationships such as heterosexual love or love for one’s own children, and I believe this is correct.”\textsuperscript{67} With self-love, which is a result of parental love, comes also the power of action or the energy to be creative. This, too, begins early. Gaylin says that children who are well loved by their mothers are precisely those who at an early age begin to venture away from them,\textsuperscript{68} and, later, those who are much loved at home have a confidence that enables them to be adventurous and productive.

Moreover, if parents are happy and love life, they pass this on to the children. Fromm ascribes this in a special way to the mother, saying: “Motherly love, in this second step, makes the child feel it is good to have been born; it instils in the child the love for life,” as distinct from the mere instinct of self-preservation. A mother’s love for life, he says, can have a deep effect on a child’s whole personality.\textsuperscript{69}

Furthermore, by having good parents children belong to people who form a stable couple and who in most cases have other children, so that they have a family with its various relationships and its \textit{life}. From this family they can make sorties and find it waiting to welcome them back when they return. Beyond this immediate family there are

\textsuperscript{66} Dominian, \textit{Cycles of Affirmation}, pp. 21-22.
\textsuperscript{67} Gaylin, \textit{Caring}, p. 79.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., p. 78.
\textsuperscript{69} Fromm, \textit{The Art of Loving}, p. 40.]
as a rule two other families, with grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and remoter relatives beyond them. Parents also often belong to a circle of friends, whose children know one another, play together and sometimes stay at each other’s houses, and new children find themselves in these communities. Moreover, the parents have a certain place or role in society, defined by their work and other commitments, and through them the children have places in the wider society which is the whole city or country: they are the doctor’s children or the gardener’s children.

Finally, if through their children adults acquire a future, through their parents children have a past. Just as parents feel that when they die they will live on in their children, children feel that they were represented on earth before they were born and they may express this by saying things like: “We came to this country in the eighteen-nineties.”

Finally, many children also benefit greatly from relationships with such quasi-parents as grandparents, childless aunts or uncles, friends of their parents who become special to them, and godparents. These persons can enlarge children’s worlds by linking them immediately to people outside their immediate families, by telling them about their work or their travels, by telling them stories besides those which the parents know, and by making them feel that they are loved not only by their parents but also by other adults out in the world.
7 The parent-child relationship when children are older and when they are adults

Free (involving free will) and mutual

Babies instinctively cling to their mothers and to other people who hold them affectionately, make them feel safe and feed them. Infants behave similarly, only now learning is added to instinct and their attitudes flow from experience as well as instinct. Later, when children reach the age of reason and responsibility, free acceptance becomes possible (and so does rejection, which I shall talk about later). Of course, children cannot choose whom they will have as parents, but they can choose whether to love their parents or not, and just as children have a right to their parents love so parents have a right to their children’s love, which is why the fourth commandment establishes love of father and mother as a serious obligation.

The love between parents and children is, then, normally mutual. Each desires the other’s love, has a right to it and, if deprived of it, yearns for it.

Communication

The question arises: Does this mutual love involve deep personal communication? When children are infants there is a communication

---

70 See above, p. 57.
71 See above, p. 57-58.
of feelings between them and their parents and they make known their wants while the parents make them feel their affection and strength, but obviously there is little sharing of ideas and the relationship is not based on the kind of mutual understanding which is established by interpersonal communication. Later, when children have just begun to go to school, there is a great deal of communication as parents give information, instructions and advice to their children and as children tell their parents about what they are doing; but at this stage the children are scarcely old enough to see their parents as persons and understand them, and the content of the communications is very limited. When, however, the children become older, they become capable of real personal communication with adults and the question arises: Ought parents and children to have such communication and establish a deep understanding of each other as persons? This is often difficult because, after having been at school for some years and having learned things which were not taught when their parents were at school, after mixing with other teenagers and some young adults and after reading books and listening to records which are foreign to their parents, the children have a somewhat different culture or subculture from that of their parents. In some cases, for instance where the children of poorly educated people are being highly educated or where immigrants have retained the culture of the country from which they came whereas their children are growing up in the culture of the country in which they now live, communication is doubly difficult. Moreover, around this time boys and girls generally have companions and it often comes more naturally to them to confide in these than in their parents—it is not with their parents that they talk for hours, face to face or on the telephone. Also, they sometimes find it easier to talk to young adults than to their parents. For their part, parents do not as a rule reveal their innermost souls to their children at this stage: if, for example, they have a financial, medical or sexual problem, they are in most cases unlikely to tell their teenage children about it, even if it occupies their thoughts almost constantly. Fortunately, while the parent–child relationship normally requires a great deal of communication, especially when the children are small, unlike other love-relationships to which I shall come later it does not need deep personal communion during its early stages and it does not absolutely require
such communion later. It is therefore arguable that, to be good parents and children, parents do not absolutely have to tell their teenage children all that is in their minds and hearts, and teenagers do not have to reveal their deepest thoughts, hopes, ambitions, anxieties and feelings to their parents. This is not to say that such communication between parents and their adult sons and daughters is impossible: on the contrary, in some families a real intimacy exists between one or both of the parents and some or even all of the children. It is marvellous and will be analysed later.

Leaving home and letting go

At an earlier time, parental authority did not cease when the sons and daughters became adults, either because men did not become their own masters until their fathers died or became very old, and women were subject to their parents until they got married (at which time they became subject to their husbands), or because parents arranged their sons’ and daughters’ marriages. In these societies, the virtue which was most praised in young men and women was that of being “dutiful” and it was shown in acquiescence to these arrangements and acceptance of—one might as well say subservience to—the parents’ rule.

In the modern world, however, as children pass through adolescence they become increasingly self-reliant in practical matters and they make more and more decisions for themselves. It is understood that they have a right to choose for themselves their friends, their hobbies and their future work, which means that they choose for themselves many of the subjects which they study. During this time their emotional dependence on their parents decreases, which is not to say that it totally disappears. Eventually they “come of age” and become legally independent, and as a rule they “leave home,” which demands courage.

During this time parental responsibility is phased out and parental authority goes with it. Parents usually understand that it would be wrong for them to try to make their son prepare himself for a particular career, or to destine him to marry this or that particular person when
he grows up, and the same is true of daughters. It is also wrong, then or later, for a parent to try to make a son or daughter pursue a particular career or marry (or not marry) a particular person, by making inheritance conditional on it. The virtue which parents most prize in their children as they approach maturity is now “responsibility” and when people become adults and leave their parents’ home they gratify them most of all by being, somewhere else, strong and independent adults of whom the parents can be proud. This, I am sure, is not merely a change but an advance.

Separation and conflict

It seems virtually impossible for this process to occur without conflict. Some conflicts arise out of selfishness and ill-will on one side or the other, but even where there is no fault on either side there are inevitably disagreements about whether in this or that matter the parents are being reasonable or not and about whether or not they are exceeding their authority. It seems to be important for everyone concerned, and that includes other members of the family as well as the disputants, to understand that conflict is not the opposite of love and need not affect it; that open conflict is generally a great deal better than the suppressed anger and simmering resentment which the avoidance of conflict often involves; that growth is often achieved through conflicts which are strongly fought and honourably resolved; and that as a rule the persons concerned ought to be allowed to have their conflicts if they must. If people have been taught that conflict and love are incompatible, they often become extremely anxious because, on the one hand, they cannot avoid conflicts and, on the other hand, they feel that conflict is wrong.

The process of separation sometimes leads to actual opposition between parents and their sons and daughters. For instance, a politician of one party may see his or her grown-up son or daughter joining a different party; people who belong to one church may see their sons or daughters abandoning religion or joining other churches; when a country is divided on an issue like the treatment of asylum seekers,
parents and their grown-up sons and daughters can be on opposite sides; and parents and their sons and daughters have been on opposite sides in civil wars and revolutions, in which people were killing each other. Very often, this causes a breach to occur, but in principle the parent-child relationship ought to continue: the parents ought to take the view that their sons and daughters are now independent of them and have no obligation to side with them on every issue but, on the contrary, ought to think for themselves and act on whatever judgments they make. “Letting go” in these circumstances demands this of parents and it may require enormous generosity; sons and daughters, on their side, ought not to turn against their parents in any personal way; and so no breach in the parent-child relationship need occur, even when “separation” goes as far as this.

That parental and filial love sometimes fade

Since parental responsibility and authority end, the question arises: Should it be regarded as natural for parents and children to drift apart until there is nothing between them which could properly be called love?

Among other animals, parents take care of their offspring, often with jealous devotion, for as long as they are needed; then the instinct ceases to operate and they are not attached to each other in any special way. In human beings, the instinctive feelings which are felt by parents of babies and small children become less intense as children grow up. At a higher level, parenthood is linked to an “emissive” tendency and hence it is in a sense natural for parents to send their grown-up sons and daughters away. For their part, children tend as they grow up to detach themselves progressively from their parents and more and more to attach themselves to friends; later they leave home, they get married and their spouses take the central places in their lives which their parents had earlier occupied. Moreover, since we were not meant to be all still crowded into the Olduvai Gorge but rather were meant by God or nature to spread over the whole earth, it has been natural for many human beings to move far away from their birthplaces and
parents, which until recently almost always meant complete loss of contact.

Sometimes differences in education, social class or national culture cause parent-child relationships to grow weak. This is perhaps a little sad, but not utterly unnatural: unlike the relationship of husband and wife, who ideally grow more closely united as time goes by, parents and children are destined to go from being very close to being less close. On the other hand, as a rule in these cases some contact is maintained, each knows where the other is and in a general way what the other is doing, and the parents retain photographs and other keepsakes in which their children remain present to them, they never become for each other just other human beings like millions of others, and so the love continues to exist.

Rejection

At times, unfortunately, definite splits occur. I said above that the parent-child relationship involves a physical bond and a free consent, which is love; I said also that parents and children are not free to choose with whom they will have this bond, but they are free to choose whether to accept it and love each other or not. Unfortunately some parents choose not to love. I talked earlier of parents who have difficulty continuing to love their children when they discover that these have defects or limitations, and some parents fail to overcome these difficulties. Others reject their children later: if parents simply lose interest in their children when they become teenagers, if they think rarely of them and spend little time talking with them or doing things with them, this amounts to a withdrawal of love or to rejection. The physical bond remains; the consent does not.

At times, parents reject their sons or daughters because of what these do when they become adults. A young man, let us say, refuses to pursue the career in law which his father had mapped out for him and to take his place in the society to which his parents are proud to belong; instead, he goes to work in the theatre, spends all his leisure time with
people who in his parents’ eyes are socially unacceptable and to top it off marries an Asian girl. That, for his parents, is the end. They never mention his name again, their friends never mention it in their presence and if someone asks them how their son is they reply, “We do not have a son.” There have been cases reported of men killing their daughters who married outside their ethnic group and its religion: these men may have loved “the family,” but they did not love their daughters.

At other times parents incompletely reject their sons or daughters: for example, if they continue to see their married son but refuse to see his wife or to let her be mentioned in their presence, they reject him as a married man while continuing to accept him as their son. Moreover, sons and daughters sometimes reject their parents. For instance, if parents lack style and the son or daughter wants to have style and to be accepted by stylish people, the young person may turn against the parents, despise them and refuse to love them; people who adopt political beliefs different from those of their parents sometimes reject their parents because of their politics; and sometimes when a man remarries after the death of his wife his sons and daughters refuse to have any more to do with him. All these rejections are unjust: unless immorality is involved, adults have a right to marry whom they choose and to live as they choose, and their parents, sons and daughters are obliged to acknowledge that they have that right and to accept them with their actions.

Moral evil is an entirely different matter, for it ought never to be accepted. Suppose, to take a clear example, that a young man becomes a burglar when both he and his parents believe that theft is morally wrong. His parents ought not to encourage him, to admire things which he has recently stolen and hope that he will rise to the top of his profession; in fact, they ought not interiorly to accept it at all. They should, however, continue to love him and this will involve hoping that he will reform his life.
The love that endures

All this is true, but nevertheless in our world, when parents and children are compatible and able to keep in touch, the bond that was forged during eighteen or so years of living together, of the parents being responsible for the children, remains in existence so that they usually see each other from time to time, keep each other informed about important events in their lives and help each other when help is needed. If they are separated by distance, they think of each other constantly, they keep in touch as well as they can and now and then they travel vast distances to see each other. Also, as I will say later, they sometimes become friends.

Quasi-parental relationships

Many quasi-parental relationships, on the other hand, which are based on a temporary connection between two people, prove to be as temporary as the connection. Patients in hospitals are often cared for with love by the nurses, and they love the nurses as children love their parents; then, when they are well, they leave and never see the nurses again. Nurses, indeed, have to learn to accept that patients whom they love get well and walk out on them. Similarly, many people, when they leave school or graduate from university, see no more of their old teachers or, if they do happen to meet one, they find that the previous relationship no longer exists. Strange as it may seem, not all forms of love are eternal, but parental-filial love in its most basic form is normally mutual and eternal.
8 Fraternal and similar loves

In a family, brothers and sisters generally love one another. This love can be deep, strong and of enormous value when people have grown up. Also, cousins and more distant relatives generally accept each other in a similar, though weaker, way, and sometimes people go to where their parents were born, find uncles, aunts and cousins and are accepted by them as family members.

These relationships of love resemble the parent-child relationship in this, that they are based on physical facts—people used to express this by talking of being of the same blood or of being blood-relatives. Also, like parents and children, the partners in these relationships do not choose one another: children who go to school with brothers and sisters can choose their friends there, and change them at will, but they did not choose their brothers and sisters and can never change them. In these loves, then, one accepts certain persons for what they are, one’s brothers or sisters. Finally, brothers and sisters often, both when they are growing up and when they are adults, love one another quite strongly without having heart-to-heart talks from time to time, which leads me to say that, like the relationships between parents and children, these relationships do not absolutely require deep personal communication.

The experience of solidarity

I have so far been dealing mainly with what I call solidarity-love in the family. I want now to move beyond that and to deal at some length with solidarity-love in general.
Solidarity can be experienced by people of the same country, and it can be the basis of love between them. For instance, picture this:

A New Zealander travelling in Greece came to a town, booked into a hotel and was told there that another New Zealander, travelling alone, had been in a car accident and was in the local hospital. Feeling that it was expected of him, and indeed expecting it of himself, he went to the hospital, found his fellow-countryman and asked him if there was anything he could do for him. “Yes,” said the accident victim, “Please call my family in Auckland and tell them what has happened and that there is no need to worry, I am being well taken care of and will be out of here in a few days.” The traveller made the call, in which he gave the message and on his own account told the family that it was true and that no one need fly to Greece. On the following day he continued on his way.

This behaviour is altruistic and springs from a kind of love, which is entirely based on the physical fact that the other is a fellow-countryman. Solidarity can also be experienced by people who went to the same school, even if they were not there at the same time, and it can lead them, too, to help one another.

Solidarity can be experienced by people who belong to the same professional group, or have a skill of some kind in common, and it can be the basis of love. An Australian cabinet-maker, let us say, travelling by bus in the United States, falls into conversation with an American fellow-passenger and after some time the American mentions that he is a cabinet-maker; surprised, the Australian says that he, too, is a cabinet-maker and at once they feel that there is a bond between them; for the next few hours they talk shop, learning from each other but—and this is more important to them—feeling that they are brothers in their craft and enjoying this feeling; and as they part they exchange addresses, saying, “If you are ever in my home town, come and see me.” I myself sometimes bind books as a sort of hobby, and once in Sydney I went looking for bookbinding thread and was directed to an amateur bookbinders’ club, which owned a workshop that its members shared. I went there, explained what I needed and why, and found myself being welcomed as one of themselves by the amateur bookbinders who were there that night, and they sold me what I needed (for
what it had cost them) with a great deal of warmth and encouragement.

The examples I have just given of solidarity and solidarity-love outside the immediate family were of isolated actions and transitory relationships of a superficial kind, in the context of which the word “love” seems too strong. There are times, however, when the awareness (it is more than a feeling) of solidarity is intense and there is no doubt that the word “love” is appropriate. For example, when people who were active in the cause of civil rights in the sixties remember those times they feel warmth in their hearts at the memory of both small groups and vast crowds singing and marching and holding hands and being almost overwhelmed by love. More recently and now, women who belong to feminist movements and who are active in the cause often feel a strong sense of sisterhood. More generally, when people work together for a considerable time for some cause to which they are deeply committed, and for which they are prepared to make great sacrifices, they often come to feel united, or bonded to one another, and what exists among them can rightly be called love.

Similarly, when people are united for a considerable time in some work which they either enjoy immensely or which is of great importance, or both, they often come to feel a great camaraderie and to treat one another as brothers and sisters, or comrades. I am told that sometimes when a film-crew is on location in some out-of-the-way place, if they all believe that the film is going to be good, if the work is going well and if no one demands special treatment or is competitive in a disruptive way, they become like a happy family, they talk freely to one another and if someone is made joyful or sad (by learning, for instance, that he or she is now a grandparent or that a parent has died), everyone shares the emotion.

Shared danger can unite people in love. If a number of women, strangers to one another, find themselves stranded in a deserted house when a bus in which they were travelling breaks down, they may become a community as they face their predicament together.\footnote{This happens in the Canadian film, \textit{The Company of Strangers} (1990).} If a country area is threatened by an approaching bushfire, all able-bodied people—rich and poor, farmers and townspeople, locals and visitors—band together to fight it, and when weary and smoke-stained
firefighters pause for sandwiches and tea all divisions between them melt away and (if I may use this term again) they are like one big, endangered family, all the members of which are ready to rush to the aid of anyone whose life is in danger and to fight for anyone’s house and property. Also, when London was bombed in 1940, people who in ordinary circumstances would not have looked at one another took refuge together in the underground and a great fellow-feeling was experienced. A similar fellow-feeling was experienced by New Yorkers, and indeed by all Americans, in the aftermath of the disasters of 11 September 2001. Without exaggeration, this fellow-feeling can be called love.

Finally, a common cause for celebration can unite many different people and make them feel that they are like brothers and sisters. When World War II ended, in the cities of the victorious nations people took to the streets to celebrate and for some hours or a day everyone was everyone else’s comrade, any man could dance with any woman, people shared their drink with whoever was near, and uppermost in everyone’s mind, for a time, was “we,” not “I.” There was a similar celebration a few years later in London at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. When Russians sent the first satellite into orbit and when some Americans first set foot on the moon there was a widespread feeling that these were achievements not only of groups of scientists or of particular countries but also of all humankind, so that where people from different countries were together many of them felt united with all other human beings in a universal “we” that had reason to celebrate.

Factors which intensify solidarity-love

The experience of solidarity which I have been describing, and the love which it involves, are sometimes intensified by one or more of the three following factors.

First, membership of any group involves a distinction between “us,” who belong to the group, and “them,” who are everyone else. (I do not mean that “they” are the enemies of “us”: at this stage they are only
“not us.”) When people think of their families, for instance, they implicitly divide the world into “family” and “others” and when we think of our compatriots we divide the world into compatriots and foreigners. The awareness of this distinction is intensified if the group is separated in some tangible way from other people. I spoke above of a film crew on location, because when a film is being made in a city, the actors and crew are together during working hours and dissolve into the population at other times, whereas on a location they are together nearly all the time and they are always visitors, distinct from the locals.

Second, if the group is visible, as not all groups are, this can increase group awareness and belongingness: black people in a predominantly white city or white people in Africa or Asia look different and if they become a group this can intensify its unity. When a sporting team has a distinctive costume, this helps its members to feel united, and if its supporters are all together, wearing the team’s colours, they, too, feel united.

Third, if the group is fighting against some enemy, this can make the fellow-feeling within it more intense. The people fighting the bushfire, of whom I spoke above, are an example of this. If the enemy is human, the feeling can be even stronger. This is, in a way, the case with football teams, for whom between matches all other teams are at least opponents, and for whom during a match the opposing team is the enemy; for a football player, every single member of the opposite side is the foe and, by contrast, every single member of his own team is his comrade. Indeed, the feeling of comradeship, of being united with other men in a team, is for some men the principal joy of (in particular) rugby, and I am sure that some supporters of football teams go to matches in order to enjoy the feeling of being united with all the other supporters.

In certain groups many of these factors come together. John Glenn Gray has written of the bonds which unite the soldiers in a military unit engaged in actual fighting: they are in danger, there is an enemy, they are separated from families and friends, they wear uniforms which visibly separate them from civilians and they are emotionally committed (let us suppose) to fighting for their country. According to

73 By “football” here I mean soccer, rugby, Australian-rules and American football. Each tends to be called “football” where it is the principal game of this kind.
John Glenn Gray, soldiers in such units are at times ready without hesitation to sacrifice their own lives for the unit as a whole.\textsuperscript{74} It is said that submarine crews during World War II came to feel even more intensely united. Members of the police force and prison guards are in a similar situation: they are in some danger, there is in some sense an enemy, they wear uniforms and they are (again let us suppose) committed to a cause, that of order and justice. Finally, miners feel different from other people and when they are in the mine they feel separated from the rest of the world by hundreds of metres of rock; they are in constant danger; and when almost all of our energy came from coal the miners felt that they were the prime movers of the country’s industry. Their lives are in each other’s hands all the time, as a careless move by any man could cause the deaths of many. I once asked a coal miner in Lancashire why he was a miner - “Your father was a miner,” I said to him, “because he had no choice, but you could have done something else” - and he replied that he knew of no other work where men were so united in comradeship, where if men were working at a coal-face and one of them was not keeping up with the others his comrades moved across to help him, and where if one man was hurt the others would come to his aid, even at risk to themselves. This is what has made miners’ strikes different from almost any other strikes.

**Observations on this love**

In many of the situations I have mentioned, the word “love” would be deemed inappropriate and words like “comradeship,” “mateship” or “loyalty” would be preferred. But all the examples I gave involve altruistic acceptance of others and if men and women are prepared to sacrifice even life itself for others, as is the case in some of the examples, if this is not love, what is?

In these relationships one does not choose one’s partner: one does not choose one’s brothers and sisters; when someone goes to Greece in search of relatives he cannot, when he comes to the town where his

\textsuperscript{74} Gray, *The Warriors*, pp. 39-51.
parents were born, select his relatives from among the people whom he finds there, as a person may select his or her friends; and the New Zealander in my story did not choose his fellow-countrymen. On the other hand, a person can choose to accept his relatives and work-mates and co-operate with them, or to reject them and act as if he were on his own. A family can be united or divided and a group of people working together in a political campaign or film unit can be a happy band of comrades willing to sacrifice their own individual interests for the good of the work or a number of individuals fighting for their own advantage. That is, where this love is concerned you choose whether to love or not, not whom.

This love often involves the belief and feeling that one is part of something larger than oneself: one feels like a part of some great "thing," one sees other people as other parts of it, one accepts the connection and so loves them. For siblings, cousins and other relatives the larger thing is the family; for fellow-countrymen it is the country; for people in the labour movements it was often "the working class" (it was important to have the idea of this immense "thing," full of energy, and to represent it visually with pictures of crowds of marching workers); for soldiers at any time it can be the army and (according to John Glenn Gray) for soldiers in battle it is above all the small fighting unit; for sailors it can be the ship; for rugby players it is the team or club; and for people who went to the same school it is the school. It is possible to think of this love as the self-love of what I am calling the "thing" and then the group, as such, is likely to enjoy what I called earlier the fruits of self-love. When, for instance, the members of a family love one another as family members, then the family loves itself and its life is happy, it is capable of achievement and it is likely to be capable of loving others—which is why if someone marries a member of a happy family he or she is likely to feel loved by the whole family, whereas if someone marries a member of a divided and unhappy family he or she may be accepted by certain individuals in it but will probably not be accepted and loved by the family as a whole.

75 See above, p. 24.
Deep personal communication is not necessary for these relationships: older children accept and love their baby brothers and sisters, who cannot talk, and in later life brothers and sisters sometimes meet, bring each other up to date on their own and their children’s doings and then find that they have nothing more to say to one another; one can care about one’s compatriots without communication with them and comrades-in-arms often do not talk about their beliefs and deep feelings.

I quoted earlier a number of authors who say that because cooperation helps groups of animals to survive and prosper, all animals have an instinctive tendency to live for their group, and this is why human beings are innately sociable. If this is true, then fraternal love and comradeship, like parental and filial loves, have an instinctive or animal element in them. Also, in many species of beast the males form hunting-packs and combine to defend the females and young from attack. There are even cases reported of beasts which got themselves killed to save others. It is therefore conceivable that in battles and rugby matches, both in attack and defence, a specifically male animal instinct comes into play which survives from our pre-human past and which is rarely activated in ordinary life. In saying this I am not implying that fraternal love and comradeship are bad, any more than if I say that sex has an animal element in it I mean that it is bad. The fact is that we are animals—rational animals, it is true, but animals—who have certain experiences in common with other animals, and in general these are good experiences. Moreover, I am not implying that the comradeship of soldiers and rugby-players is sub-human, since when it is at its best spiritual powers are engaged in it so that it is not purely animal. Now when, as is obviously the case with sexual love, a human experience has a strong animal component as well as a strong spiritual one, it is usually intense, and this explains the intensity, not to say the ferocity, of the feelings which are sometimes aroused in situations that involve solidarity-love.
8-Fraternal & similar loves

How long does this love last?

Sometimes the objective link between equals is indestructible but the subjective consent which is based on it fades when the persons concerned are separated by distance, by class divisions or by religion, or when they simply go their different ways. In a Maigret novel one can read conversations like this:

“When did you last see your sister?”
“Six or seven years ago.”
“Did you communicate with her during that time?”
“We sent each other Christmas cards, just the cards, that was all.”

In cases like this the love fades almost to insignificance, though it is sometimes revived when there is a death in the family and its members gather to offer genuine sympathy to each other.

At other times the link between people, while not indestructible, is fairly certain to be permanent. This is usually the case between people of the same country, and while the wonderful fellow-feeling that a great number of people, young and old, rich and poor, can feel during bushfires, air-raids or national celebrations generally evaporates when life returns to normal, a quiet sense of belonging-together is always there. Also, between the senior members of a religious order there is usually a “camaraderie” or fraternal charity which is permanent. At other times a link which was intended to be permanent, and was expected to last till death, is broken. For instance, when people leave a religious order they often find that, after a time, they no longer feel emotionally linked to the people in it (whereas their friendships with particular persons in the order are almost unaffected by their leaving).

In other cases the objective link between people is temporary by nature and the love ends when the link ceases to exist. John Glenn Gray says that soldiers who fight together in wartime can be ready to die for one another but when the war ends and they go their separate ways they find at reunions of old soldiers that they are not even very interested in each other;76 and often people who come together for a

---

temporary work—let us say, a political action or the making of a film—can, after being a loving band of comrades, go their separate ways when the job is done and not keep in touch. The love was genuine and even intense while it lasted but it is not universally true that love is eternal.

The reach of this love

People can have a sense of solidarity with others whom they have never met. For instance, people separated from their country by war or a political division can learn that they have nephews and nieces, or even brothers and sisters, who were born after their departure and they can love them from afar. Women who let their children be adopted, and who never see them, can go through life caring about them, hoping that they are well and in a word loving them. There are also cases on record of brothers and sisters who as infants were placed in separate orphanages and who grew up not knowing of each other’s existence until the brother (let us say) heard that he had a sister and went in search of her, saying to himself with feeling: “I have a sister somewhere and I want to find her—for one thing, I want to make sure that she is all right.” Already, he loved her.

Is it possible to love all human beings with this kind of love? If like other animals we instinctively tend to be sociable towards the members of our own groups, it would seem that we equally instinctively tend to be hostile towards other groups of the same species, since this is how most animals behave; and this might explain why children tend to form groups within which there is love but between which there are fights, why there are feuds between families and wars between tribes, and perhaps why there have been so many wars between nations. Also, a reproducing animal group instinctively rejects any individuals which appear in it if they are deformed or visibly disadvantaged in a new way, because this prevents unfavourable gene mutations from being passed on and so benefits the group; we, then, may tend instinctively to reject any human beings who appear among us who are visibly different from ourselves in ways which to us are new, and the
behaviour of children tends to support this hypothesis. If this is so, to love all human beings we need to block certain instinctive tendencies and this, as I said earlier, is never easy. Moreover, when solidarity-love springs from the feeling that one is part of some great “thing,” our awareness of this “thing” is (as I said) heightened if it is in some way opposed to similar things; when a great natural catastrophe occurs and hundreds of people are rendered homeless by an earthquake or volcanic eruption, human beings everywhere are suddenly made aware of the human race as a single great thing which has been attacked by its great adversary, nature, and from all over the world help is sent to the stricken area; but most of the time we do not think of the whole human race as opposed to anything and we are far more aware of the divisions between groups of human beings than of the unity of all human beings taken together, so that an all-inclusive solidarity-love does not come easily to us. It is, nevertheless, possible. Fromm says:

By this [brotherly love] I mean the sense of responsibility, care, respect, knowledge of any other human being, the wish to further his life… . Brotherly love is love for all human beings; it is characterised by its very lack of exclusiveness… . In brotherly love there is the experience of union with all men, of human solidarity, of human at-onement. Brotherly love is based on the experience that we all are one. The differences in talents, intelligence, knowledge are negligible in comparison with the identity of the human core common to all men.77

This is what we must strive for.78

Because this kind of love does not require shared beliefs, it is possible for opponents to love each other in this way. Political opponents, for example, while holding incompatible political philosophies and having radically different views about what ought to be done, can conduct their debates without animosity and if one of them suffers a bereavement the others can express sympathy and be careful to draw no advantage from it. This can be done without hypocrisy, since the courtesy and sympathy are genuine, and also without any suggestion of weakness—indeed, a strong person, secure in his or her own

77 Fromm, The Art of Loving, p. 38.
78 See above, pp.51-52.
convictions, may find it easier than others to act in this way. Members of the same family can be on opposite sides of an issue like the treatment of asylum seekers or the ordination of women, and nevertheless love one another. Perhaps the closer people are to one another and the more they have to live and work together, the harder it is for them to combine love and opposition, and it may require a magnanimity which is rare: but it is always in principle possible. What is more difficult is to love people with whom we have nothing in common, intellectually or emotionally, who get on our nerves and whom we dislike and with whom we must associate; yet, because this kind of love does not require psychological affinity, this, too, is possible. In all these cases love can be one-sided.

But what about people who not only oppose or irritate us but who immorally hurt us? Can the person who has been or is being tortured love the torturer, and the higher-ups who gave the order, not to mention the doctor standing by? Could the inmates of Auschwitz love the Nazis or the inmates of a gulag love Stalin? And what about people who hurt not us, ourselves, but others whom we love or with whom we are united: if a son or daughter becomes a drug addict and eventually dies of an overdose, can the parents love the people who import and distribute drugs? Can a Jew love Eichmann and Barbie, dead or alive? The answer to all these questions is: “Yes, with solidarity-love.” This precludes hating them and also desiring revenge and it involves hoping, ultimately, for their reform; it involves being willing to forgive them in the unlikely event of their repenting and asking forgiveness; if they have died, it involves hoping, not that they died unrepentant and went to hell but that in the end they repented and are now in heaven. It does not, however, preclude anger, and in all the cases I have given anger is called for. Moreover, it does not, I believe, preclude wanting evildoers to be punished: though it is very often said to do so, this does not spring from a lust for vengeance but from a sense of justice.

What, finally, about people who know us personally, who perhaps were once our friends and who now hate us? As I shall say later, we cannot be friends with such persons, but, instead of returning hate for hate, we can love them with solidarity-love.

We are able, then, if we choose, to love in this way everyone of whose existence we know, and I shall return to this. This is not to say that we
can or should love everyone equally: where this kind of love is concerned we quite properly love more those people who are more closely linked with ourselves—parents love their own children more than other people’s children, brotherly-and-sisterly love is stronger than cousinly, and if on our travels we see someone in distress we move more quickly to help him if he is our fellow-countryman.

This love that I am talking about is not the love of humanity in the abstract which is felt by a doctor in Dostoyevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*, who says:

> I love humanity, but I can’t help being surprised at myself: the more I love humanity in general, the less I love men in particular, I mean, separately, as separate individuals…. I become an enemy of people the moment they come close to me. But, on the other hand, it invariably happened that the more I hated men individually, the more ardent became my love for humanity at large.\(^79\)

(This doctor sounds like those people who say that they love France but cannot stand French people.) Jaspers may have had that passage in mind when he said: “The man who loves mankind only does not love at all, but one who loves a particular human being does.”\(^80\) It is a love of people, and while spread over all human beings it may seem thin, it can quickly become strong love for particular persons who come our way, and in times of crisis it can move people to be recklessly generous to complete strangers.

---


\(^80\) Jaspers, *Philosophy*, I, 57.
9 False forms of solidarity-love

While there can be open rejection or hatred between people who ought to have solidarity-love for each other, there are also attitudes which have an appearance of love, and which the people who have them think are love, but which are not love at all. I want to say a few words about these attitudes here, entering the sphere of pathological emotional states and behaviour, about which an enormous amount has been written.

Parental aberrations

Certain parents do not take their full measure of responsibility for their children, do not spend as much time with them as they should, in their hearts feel that their children are nuisances, and so do not love them very much, if at all. Of these, some compensate for their neglect, and conceal from themselves their failure to love, by spending excessive amounts of money on their children and by indulgently letting them do as they please. “We know we are spoiling our children,” they say, “but we can’t help it—we love them so much that we cannot refuse them anything.” Karl Menninger says of this:

I doubt very much whether any child is ever spoiled by too much love. What passes for excessive “love” on the part of the parents is often only thinly disguised hate or guilt, and this fact is perceived by the child.
For the parents’ neglect and disguised aggression, Menninger says, “the child will certainly some day, perhaps at great cost to himself, take full and terrible revenge.”

Some parents are greedy on their children’s behalf, wanting them to have as many things as possible. They also have restless ambition for them and obsessively drive them towards worldly success, depriving themselves of personal satisfactions and ruthlessly trampling on other people in the process. They want their children to be social celebrities and to this end spend fortunes on the clothes they wear and on lessons in social skills, including sports which are played by the rich. They control their children’s lives in minute detail and delay allowing them to make their own choices in matters of any consequence. If their children achieve any success, however small, they boast of it to everyone they meet. In all this they imagine that they are showing great love for their children, for whom they say that they “want the best.” These are probably people who had children in the first place not because of their fullness of being and their self-love but because of lacks which they felt in themselves and a deficiency of self-love. Their principal aim is to obtain through their children vicariously the success or esteem which has been denied to them in their own persons and when they tell others about their children’s successes they are really boasting like people who magnify and endlessly relate their own successes—and if they are not aware of this, other people are. They thus do little for their children but a lot for their own glory. If, as is likely, the children at some stage rebel, these parents vociferously complain of ingratitude “after I had done so much for you,” but the children may perceive, rightly, that they have in truth little cause for gratitude.

Yet another aberrant form of parental love is that of people who “love” their children specifically as children. In the extreme case, a parent like this can be secretly pleased if his child dies since then he has for ever in his memory a picture of the child, uncontaminated by any images of a later adolescent and adult. If the children disobligingly remain alive and grow up, a parent of this kind either loses interest in them or, refusing to accept them for what they are, tries to keep them dependent and continues to talk to them as if they were little children.

81 Menninger, *Man Against Himself*, p. 150.
For parents, a test of their love comes when it is time to “let go” of their children. Some parents contrive to keep their children dependent on them, or they demand to be telephoned every evening or every couple of evenings by their grown-up sons and daughters who have left home. Like spoiling, this has an appearance of love but it is not genuine parental love.

Finally, a pseudo-love is sometimes found in teachers, particularly at the tertiary level. These teachers know their students personally, devote much time to them during and after hours, help and encourage them in their studies and counsel them and help them (even financially) in practical ways, as a parent might do. They thus seem to have great love for their students, but whenever any students show that they have been reading some books of which the master does not approve, talking to other teachers and developing minds of their own, the teacher refuses to tolerate this and ridicules the deviants into submission or forces them out of the circle of disciples. Then the teacher’s “love” is shown to have been false.

False filial love

If a son is so “dutiful” that he clings to his parents and refrains from freeing himself from them to establish a separate identity and make his own life, if he is willingly guided by them in all important matters—for instance, marrying a person whom they virtually choose and letting them arrange the ceremony and decide how the couple’s house will be furnished—then he may seem to love them very much, but this is not genuine filial love. He probably clings to his parents from fear of independence and responsibility, and he may at the same time resent his parents’ control over him. He may even hate them for (as he feels) blocking his development. An analogous “love” is that of some disciples for their master, whose system they take whole and unaltered, so that whenever a question arises for them they at once ask themselves, “What does the master say about this?” and so that whenever you have a discussion with them you soon find that you are not so much hearing them as hearing their master at second hand.
The extreme form of this has been called “engulfment.” This is what happens when a person, who usually has a very low self-esteem, joins a group of people who blindly follow some leader, or joins a party or movement which demands the complete surrender of mind and will. This was found in Nazism and Communism and is now found in pseudo-religious cults. As Fromm says, when people join one of these movements, their individual selves are annihilated in the sense that they cease to function as persons in their own right and think only what they are told to think, feel what they are meant to feel, and do what they are told to do. At the same time they feel that they are parts of some great thing. Fromm says:

By becoming part of a power which is felt as unshakeably strong, eternal and glamorous, one participates in its strength and glory. One surrenders one’s own self and renounces all strength and pride connected with it, one loses one’s integrity as an individual and surrenders freedom; but one gains a new security and a new pride in the participation in the power in which one submerges. One also gains security against the torture of doubt…. [This kind of person] is saved from making decisions, saved from the final responsibility for the fate of his self, and thereby saved from the doubt of what the meaning of his life is or who “he” is. These questions are answered by the relationship to the power to which he has attached himself. The meaning of his life and the identity of his self are determined by the greater whole into which the self has submerged.\(^8^2\)

As Nietzsche said, the person who rejects himself makes an ideal slave.\(^8^3\) A horrible part of all this is that the person’s attitude may claim the name of love—love of the leader, love of the party, love of the cause or even love of truth or humanity—whereas it is no such thing.

It seems likely that the cause of all these aberrations is the same: lack of self-love.

---


\(^8^3\) Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, # 358, p. 196.
The selfish family

I outlined earlier the view of certain evolutionary scientists, according to whom it is the self-reproducing group, not the individual, which competes and survives, so that the evolutionary world-picture is of co-operation within groups but competition between them. This may explain why in certain societies individuals are willing to devote themselves self-sacrifically to preserving or increasing the status and wealth of their families, but the families are entirely self-centred and exclusive: the proverb, “Blood is thicker than water,” and the motto, “The family comes first,” mean in practice unselfish individuals in selfish families.

This attitude can or could be found at a high social level in great families. Sons married and had children for the family; in all financial decisions the principal aim was to keep the family estate intact; and if a family member became a politician or a bishop his first loyalty was to the family. Since many of the early Jesuits came from such families, Ignatius Loyola demanded of men entering the Society that they leave father, mother, brothers and sisters and, indeed, take as addressed to them the words of Jesus about hating father, mother, wife, children, brothers and sisters (Luke 14:26). They could not be firstly Borgias, say, and secondly Jesuits. This exclusive family loyalty also existed, apparently, in peasant families in Europe. In Jean de Florette and Manon des sources, Marcel Pagnol tells of the Soubeyran family in the high country of Provence, the members of which stopped at nothing to keep everything in the family and to increase its land and wealth. The Soubeyrans were so unwilling to share their goods with others that they even married within the family, which led to three lunatics and three suicides. In The Godfather books and films the members of the Corleone family from Sicily are absolutely committed to the family and recognise no values outside it. They bring outsiders in as wives, counsellors and agents; but it is always clear that these people have been brought in for their usefulness to the family, to which they do not entirely belong since they are not of the blood: the sister clearly

85 Ignatius Loyola, Examen Generale, # [61].]
belongs to the family in a way that the wife could never do. In such families when an old man is dying his brothers, sisters and children sometimes form a group around him from which his wife is subtly excluded because, after all, she is not related to him by blood.

Similarly, some refugees from oppressed countries pay huge sums of money to enable their relatives to leave those countries and join them, but flatly refuse to contribute to appeals for money to bring out nameless other people. There are also old people who, when they make their wills, tell their family lawyers that when they die everything is to go to “the family,” and in subsequent discussion reveal that this does not include spouses or adopted children of blood relatives.

Tribalism

At times a large number of people (1) form a distinct and separate self-reproducing group, so that one is born into it by being born to people who belong to it; (2) are distinguishable from others by their appearance, or in some cases by their language; and (3) are either completely segregated or mix with others in only a limited way. Often the group has its own land (this used not to be the case in Europe with Jews and gypsies; in the United States it is not the case with blacks but it is the case with Native Americans). Often, too, the visible difference of members of the group from others is emphasised by recognisable clothes, hair-styles or bodily decoration such as tattoos, and by the eating of particular food or by specific ways of preparing food. If the group has its own language, its members, when they speak another language, may have a recognisable accent, or make mistakes which at once identify them as members of their group; if it does not have its own language, it may have its own way of speaking the common language. The group may have its own religion, which it practises in highly visible ways. Finally, the group may have its own musical tradition, which it exercises in public. The cultural differences are secondary: it is birth that counts and such groups do not, as a general rule, intermarry with other groups and sometimes they do not accept the offspring of sexual intercourse of their members with people of
other groups. In some parts of the world these groups are called tribes; elsewhere they are called “ethnic groups.”

Where a tribe or ethnic group such as I have described has its own land and is self-governing, it can often live at peace with neighbouring different groups, except that there may be occasional clashes at the border. There are times, however, when a number of tribes or ethnic groups and their lands are united to form one country. In Africa, for example, imperial powers conquered and subjugated various tribes and created countries with many tribes, between which there is now civil war; and what was Yugoslavia is similar.

Tribalism is family-selfishness on the larger scale of the tribe or ethnic group. Where it exists, there can be great generosity within the group, and members of it can be prepared to give their lives for it and for its land or culture, but love stops sharply at the edge of the group. When tribalism takes over in an area where there are several “tribes,” there is continual unrest, which may continue until countries break into parts, and in extreme cases massacres occur which may be called “ethnic cleansing.” What is wrong here is the inability or refusal to take into account the solidarity of the whole human race.

The opposite to this can be observed in most modern nation-states, including Canada and Belgium, which are made up of different ethnic groups, and in the European Union. There people have agreed not to be tribalistic but, while loving their own cultures, to put first something which is more general than their own group. This can be seen as a huge advance, involving a triumph of the spirit over animal instinct.

At times one ethnic group in a country may be dominant and repress another in various ways, and members of the repressed group may agitate for fairer treatment. At the risk of offending Walloons whom I knew when I lived in Belgium, I will say that this was the case there with the Flemish people; and it was, perhaps still is, the case with the French Canadians. In cases such as these it would be wrong to describe the activity of the repressed group as “tribalism” in action. It is solidarity of a good kind.
Wholes and parts

Many large organisations or communities have particular groups, each of which has a definite membership, within them: most countries have states, provinces or regions, a city has quarters or suburbs, a university has faculties, and the Catholic Church has dioceses and religious orders within it. These are not ethnic in the sense that one is born into them, but they have their own identities. At times, members of the smaller groups have a strong sense of belonging to them, with a weak sense of belonging to the larger “thing”—for instance, the members of a university faculty may have no interest in what is happening in other faculties and take little part in the life of the university as a whole; or the citizens of a state may feel that what happens in other states has nothing to do with them and resent the authority of the central government which represents the country as a whole. In the Catholic Church, members of religious orders can have a strong loyalty to their own orders and a rather weak sense of belonging to the Church. This is most likely to happen when people are unhappy about what is going on in the larger “thing”; if the engineering faculty of a university is serenely going about its business while the rest of the university is in turmoil as students, supported by some staff, demand a complete overhaul of its system of government, the engineers may decide that they are simply engineers and that they don’t much care what happens in the rest of the university. On the one hand, it is natural and it is right for people to feel more warmly about their “part” than about “the whole,” and to regard its members as more closely bound to them than are other members of “the whole”; on the other hand, the part or group is selfish if its members feel little or no sense of belonging in the first place to the larger whole.

What is wrong in these cases

In all the cases I have been describing there is solidarity and love between the members of the family, the tribe or other group. In a way
that, as far as it goes, is admirable, they pursue not only their own individual interests but also—and sometimes to a greater extent—those of the group. The trouble is that their sense of oneness-with-others stops at the frontier of a relatively small group of people. Sometimes this is because any larger “thing” is too huge and remote for people with small minds to form a mental picture of it; at other times, its visible inner diversity is so plain and its spiritual inner unity so elusive that unspiritual people cannot see the unity. Let us face it, it is not easy to see all human beings as one with us in the human family, or as one with us in the kingdom of God.

Another trouble is that loyalty to a definite group can lead people to do things which seem to them to be entirely justified but which are in fact immoral, and harmful to the larger community. I spoke earlier of the strong bonds of solidarity which can unite men and women in, for instance, the police force. In itself, this solidarity is a good thing but it seems that at times individual members of the police force are guilty of crimes—for instance, taking bribes or illegally beating people—and everyone in the force is expected to protect them, if necessary by lying. Indeed, after a policeman has been murdered it has been known for others, convinced that it is the right thing to do, to avenge his death by committing murder themselves. Also, young people sometimes form gangs in which loyalty to the group as a whole is demanded of every member of it, so that, for instance, if one of a gang of young men gets a girl pregnant the others swear that they had intercourse with her, too, so that she cannot know who the father is. Finally, love of country is sometimes put before morality, as in the saying, “My country, right or wrong,” or ways are found to justify morally what love of country seems to demand. In these situations, the group—the police force, the gang or the country—becomes the locus of all value, which is obviously wrong.
I want now to gather, in a short chapter, some observations on solidarity-love in all its forms.

In the sound relationships which we have been considering, an objectively real link exists prior to the love and is the reason for the psychological or subjective bond which is established by knowledge and acceptance: someone is, as a matter of objective fact, and whether I know it or not, my brother or my compatriot; I know this or I learn of it; I accept him; this is love. That is, there is a movement here from objective reality into subjectivity.

The primary solidarity-relationships—those between parents and children—involve inequality and the authority of one person over another. Other solidarity-relationships are between equals.

Solidarity-love can exist without being returned. People love babies and severely retarded children who can show affection but who cannot, properly speaking, love them; mothers whose children have been adopted by other people can love them even though the children do not know who they are; moved by love, a person can work behind the scenes for unmarried mothers or AIDS victims, none of whom will ever know his or her name; and it is possible for us to love people who are hostile to us.86 There is always, however, a desire for a return of love and, if this desire is fulfilled, a delight in being loved by someone whom one loves.87 The parents who love their babies enjoy the babies’ responses which are the beginnings of love and they look forward to being loved properly in years to come. The woman who consented to the adoption of her child, and who still loves him or her, suffers because her love is not returned. It is not easy to work behind the

86 I here disagree with David J. Hassel, who says: “One of the basic insights into the human heart and mind rather early in life is that love is reciprocal or nonexistent” (Searching the Limits of Love, p. 6).
87 See above, p. 36.
scenes for unmarried mothers or AIDS victims without getting any thanks from them. And anyone who loves a whole group of people wants to be accepted or loved by the group as a whole.

Relationships of solidarity-love, even when they are reciprocal, do not need personal communication and mutual understanding in order to come into existence and they can survive if, after having been there, mutual understanding is lost. As we will see, they can survive even when a parent and his or her son or daughter have become friends and the friendship has been broken.\(^88\)

In the primary forms of solidarity-love the links between the persons concerned are indestructible but the consent, in which love consists, can fade and it can also be changed to rejection. In the secondary forms of this love the links are often impermanent and then so is the love, though it may be intense while it lasts.

Is this love free?

Sometimes, if we say that an action is free we mean that we are capable both of doing it and of not doing it; the opposite is “involuntary.” Some parents are indifferent to their children or even reject them, which shows that these attitudes are possible; of course, they are also capable of loving them. And we are capable of loving all other human beings, or not. Generally speaking, then, when we love someone else with solidarity-love, we do so freely, in this sense. In certain situations we are vividly conscious of our freedom: if, for example, I belong to a group of some kind and dislike another member of it, it may be crystal clear to me that I have two alternatives: either in spite of my dislike for him to accept him because he is a member of the group, or though he is a member of the group to reject him because I dislike him. In other situations we find ourselves closely linked to people, feel absolutely no inclination to reject them and are not conscious of a choice. But the freedom is there, in both kinds of situation.

On the other hand, since as a rule we do not choose the people with whom we have objective bonds, we are not free to choose the persons

\(^{88}\) See below, p. 186.
whom we love with this kind of love: parents can choose between loving and not loving their children, but not between loving these or other persons as their children; no one chooses his or her parents, brothers or sisters; and generally speaking people do not choose their compatriots, fellow-soldiers or work-mates.

The word “free” has another sense, that of “not subject to an obligation.” When Catholics were obliged to abstain from meat on Fridays, they were, in this sense of the word, not free to eat it. Now we are. Since parents are morally obliged to love their children, children are obliged to love their parents and indeed all human beings are obliged to love all other human beings as their fellow human beings, solidarity-love is, generally speaking, obligatory and we are not in this sense free to love or not love other people.

The person in this love

If someone loves me with this kind of love, it would be incorrect—and unfair to him—to say that he loves not me but the family, the military or humanity. He really does love me. On the other hand, he loves me as his son, as his father, as his brother, as a member of some group to which we both belong, or as a human being; therefore, though I may offend some readers by saying this, while he loves me, who am a person, he does not love me “because I am me” or as a person. This is why, for this kind of love, it is not necessary for the people concerned to know each other personally. It is also why the object of the love is in some cases interchangeable with others: for instance, if I join a group of people who are working for some cause and come to be loved by them as a comrade without ever talking about my personal life or theirs, if I leave the group and my place is taken by someone else, they transfer their love from me to him. This would be impossible if they loved me as a person, because as a person I am unique, not interchangeable.

The analysis of solidarity-love seems to confirm the view of those who say that we are by nature friendly beings, co-operative and social, since it implies that it is natural for all human beings to see what they
have in common with each other and to love each other. From it emerges the picture of a united, co-operative and, in the case of persons, a loving universe. If this picture is right, while some human beings are born into hostile environments and grow up fighting for their lives, their cases are not typical. On the contrary, it is normal for human beings to find themselves lovingly welcomed into families which have been eagerly waiting for them and which will take care of them until they can take their places in the larger, friendly world.

The significance of this love

I said earlier that it is possible for us to love, with solidarity-love, everyone of whose existence we know. At one time people knew of the existence of few people outside their immediate societies, and when later there was more contact between different peoples they seemed so foreign to one another in their physical appearance, language, dress and customs that feelings of solidarity were almost impossible. Also, as I have said, tribalism still exists, because of which many people have an exclusive love for their own region or country and refuse to accept foreigners, except in so far as they are useful for their own country. An evident feature of the last century or more, however, is that millions of people have travelled and almost all human beings, wherever they are on the earth, know of the existence of almost all other human beings, so that cultural and other differences no longer prevent people from seeing foreigners as human beings like themselves. The event of 11 September 2001 was not merely reported but shown all over the world. Moreover, with this knowledge has come a kind of love and if a volcanic eruption or earthquake causes widespread desolation anywhere, within a day and from all over the world people rush to the stricken area with food and medical assistance. Also, countries are forming combinations of various kinds, such as the European Union; the United Nations is a gathering of all countries into at least a nominal union; and sporting events like the Olympic Games and the soccer World Cup, while superficially they are conflicts between nations, actually unite the population of the world while they are
going on. That is, we are moving towards a point where all human beings, almost without exception, will be united in solidarity-love. If, as I believe is the case, human evolution now involves drawing human beings together, solidarity-love is of immense importance in this process.
Part 3

Ecstatic Love
11 The steps towards ecstatic love

Meeting

You are in a gathering of people, none of whom you know personally and all of whom seem to you to be uninteresting. You are wondering how soon you can escape. You move about, making pleasant faces at boring people and passing quickly from one to another because you have nothing to say to any of them. Except in a purely geographical sense, you are absent from the scene and you are alone. Then you come across someone who is standing by himself and who seems as remote as you are from the other people. You let fall a comment which could be taken as just another piece of conversational small-change, but in it you express your boredom and loneliness, though you do not expect him to see it as anything more than an offhand remark, such as people make without thinking. To your surprise, the other replies in a serious voice, and from his tone you know that you have been fully understood. He has seen through the mask that is your party-face; he has entered your mind and looked at your thoughts. For a moment you are embarrassed, but in the same instant you realise that he thinks and feels exactly as you do, and that you know his thoughts as much as he knows yours. You both know that each understands the other and that you are in tune with each other. You at once begin to talk, sincerely now and not in banalities, and you find that you have so much to say to each other that you forget about the rest of the gathering, until something happens which amuses both of you, so that you laugh together and each is delighted to find that what amused him also amused the other. A meeting has occurred.
In ordinary language if I am introduced to someone and we shake hands and say, “How do you do?” to each other, then move away, I may later say that I have met him or her, but when from now on I talk of meetings I shall mean the word in a strong personal sense—I shall mean meetings like the one I have just described.

If we analyse meeting we observe that if you meet someone you in no way feel that you have produced or constituted him. On the contrary, you are conscious of the fact that he was already there, in existence as a person in his own right, before you came along and found him. As Sartre says, “We encounter the Other; we do not constitute him.” Even more briefly, meeting includes finding.

Meetings depend on three things: chance, people’s natures and choice.

(1) Chance. In the example above, you and the other person did not intend to meet and no one else arranged it: it was by chance that you and he were in a particular part of the room, alone, at the same time. Most meetings happen like this. Sometimes, it is true, meetings are arranged either by the persons concerned or by others who bring them together, but even here chance is involved at an earlier stage since the persons happen to have heard of each other or to know the same people.

(2) People’s natures. For people to meet, in the strong sense of the word, they need to have a certain natural affinity with each other, as in the example above. If people have nothing in common or if they find each other’s manner or attitudes repugnant, it is extremely unlikely that if they come near each other a meeting will occur.

(3) Free choice. If two people who have an affinity with each other happen to be somewhere at the same time they do not necessarily or involuntarily have a meeting. In the example above, when you made the remark in which you expressed your feelings, the other, though seeing what you meant, could have elected to keep his distance and made some banal reply in a detached manner. (How often have we done this? Someone says to us, “Life is hard.” We know quite well that he means that he has a problem and wants to talk about it, but not wanting to be bothered with him we pretend to think that the remark was a trite generality and, hardening our hearts, we keep the conver-

89 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 250.
sation from becoming personal.) You, for your part, on discovering that the other had seen into your mind, could have quickly closed the window and shut him out. *The meeting took place because you both freely chose to have it.*

For a meeting to occur, persons have to be free to “be themselves” and to say and show what they themselves really think and feel. If one talks to people who are fanatically committed to some system of thought which determines what they say about every imaginable issue, one may find oneself at every turn being shown only the system, never the person, and one may leave knowing more about the system and not having met the person. Also, meetings can be almost impossible in institutions where people are required to conceal their inmost thoughts and feelings and to conform to a pattern in what they say and do. In many sporting clubs, on the other hand, in debating societies, in cultural associations, in universities (especially among the students), people with a common interest come together, many of them have other things in common, they are all perfectly free to be their individual selves and to start conversations with each other, and many meetings occur. Also, it happens at times that people who live in an institution which limits self-expression leave it together for an outing or have a conversation late at night when the institution is asleep and no one is watching them, and for the first time in each other’s presence they talk freely, find one another and meet.

Shared laughter can be the clinching factor in a meeting. For instance, in the film *Brief Encounter* (if my memory of it is correct) a man comes to the aid of a woman, they come across each other later, have lunch together in a restaurant where a rather peculiar lady cellist is playing, then decide to go to a film. In the cinema, at interval, the same lady cellist appears and plays. They blink, then they (and no other people) burst out laughing. At that moment the last remnants of strangeness between them disappear. Konrad Lorenz says:

> Heartily laughing at the same thing forms an immediate bond…. Finding the same thing funny is not only a prerequisite to a real friendship, but very often the first step to its formation.90

---

Finally, meetings are usually emotional experiences: in the one I described you experienced a surge of delight when you met the other person and when a man and a woman meet in a way that can be the beginning of a relationship of sexual love there may be an almost overwhelming flood of emotion.

**Presence or being-with**

Two persons who have met each other are, at least for a time, *together*, *with* each other, or *present* to each other. This presence is obviously more than geographical: two people sitting side by side in a bus, ignoring each other, are not *with* each other and if the conductor asks them, “Are you two people together?” they say, “No.” Being-together is constituted by the attention which persons give to each other as persons, or by “the turning towards the other” which Buber says is the basic movement of the life of dialogue.91 The opposite of this presence is personal absence, which is far more than not being somewhere, and it is possible for two people to live in the same house without being *with* each other because by free choice they are turned not towards but away from each other.

**Communion, communication or “really talking”**

Normally, two persons who are with each other talk and listen to one another. What they say is not debate or argument, which is what happens when two people who disagree with each other try to find out who is right; it is not precisely discussion, which is what happens when people pool their information in order to obtain as complete a picture as possible or when in order to arrive at a sound decision people share their opinions about what should be done: it is what Buber calls “dialogue,” what my contemporaries used to call “long talks” (as in “I

---

91 Buber, *Dialogue in Between Man and Man*, p. 22.
had a long talk with Brian last week”), what young people I know call “deep and meaningful conversation,” what is sometimes called communication (as in “Jim and I cannot communicate any more”), and what people in films call “really talking” with another person (as in “We never really talk to one another, it’s time we did”). Its chief purpose is to establish mutual personal understanding. When, for instance, a man and a woman who have recently fallen in love talk to one another, their conversation is valuable not because in it each adds to the other’s store of useful information but because by talking they come to know one another better. Such conversations, then, are not about impersonal matters, however important these may be, which is why colleagues in an office can talk for years about their work without ever “really talking” to one another. They are about our religious and other deeply-held beliefs, which form the core of our world-views; they are about our childhoods and other past personal experiences and about what we are doing now; and they are about our chief aims in life and our hopes for the future. That is, we talk about “the things that make us tick” and we reveal our “inmost selves”: self-revelation is of the essence of personal communication. We may talk about these things explicitly but we more often reveal them obliquely by talking about other people, events, books and films—when people seem to be using each other to obtain deeper understanding of a film they have just seen they may actually be using it to obtain deeper understanding of each other.

For “really talking” the normal medium is the spoken word, with tones of voice, hesitations and other signs of emotion. The written word, however, has a value of its own and there are times when people who see each other frequently, or who even live together, find it helpful to write to each other. Besides words, whether spoken or written, gestures and other expressive actions are used a great deal in personal communication. Moreover, as I shall say later,92 we exteriorise our inner selves in our clothes and in the things with which we surround ourselves—the pictures on our walls, the books on our shelves, our records, our furniture and so on—so that while sometimes we admit other people into our houses for purely practical purposes (in which case we do not like them to look at more than they

92 See below, pp.145-146.
need to see), if we take home someone whom we are getting to know this is a significant self-revelatory action. Within the house there are some rooms which are more personal than others, and cupboards and drawers which are highly personal and private, representing zones of the self which we are willing to reveal to few other people, if any: to allow someone else to see these constitutes deep personal communication.

Personal communication involves listening as well as talking. It is possible to watch other persons and listen to them in a detached or even hostile studious way, trying to understand them analytically, perhaps to discover their weaknesses. In this activity watcher-listeners give nothing of themselves but only take from the persons whom they observe. In personal communication, however, listeners are not detached observers analysing the speakers, and in listening attentively they give their attention to the speakers and indeed give themselves—as Gabriel Marcel says, there is a way of listening that is a way of giving oneself.93 Whereas no one likes to be watched or observed analytically, we all at times want people to give us their personal attention and listen to us.

Likeness and difference: nature and choice

For this kind of communication people do not need to be completely alike. As Graham Little says, “likeness is as liable to breed competition as co-operation, and similar people often can’t abide each other.”94 Many books and articles by Thomists about love say that it is based on similarity of nature, but this is simply not true of the kind of love to which the communication which we are now analysing is going to lead. Moreover, for this kind of communication people do not need to be intellectually in complete agreement about absolutely everything that is important to them, or to be of the same emotional type. On the other hand, they do need to have a certain intellectual and emotional affinity. For all of us, there are some other people with

whom we can really talk and others with whom we seem to have nothing in common so that while we can carry on a superficial or purely practical conversation with them we feel that if we were to tell them our inmost thoughts they would not understand them, and we also have little desire to know their inmost thoughts and feelings, which we feel sure would be foreign to us.

Communication thus, like meeting, depends on the natures, especially the psychological natures, of the persons concerned. It also depends on free choice: we choose whether to talk or not and in a significant conversation we make hundreds of conscious free choices as we think of things to tell or say, we ask ourselves, “Will I say this or not?” or “Will I say it now or wait till later?,” and of our free will we decide one way or the other. We also think of questions to put to the other and freely decide whether to ask them now, at some later time, or never.

Knowing another person

When people talk and listen to each other about personal matters, they come to know each other. Knowing someone supposes meeting and communication—one might have read a great deal about Prince Charles but unless one has met him and talked with him one cannot claim to know him—and it is usually mutual. John Macmurray calls it “knowledge of persons as persons” and he says: “I can know another person as a person only by entering into personal relation with him”; such knowledge, he says, is obtained only by revelation. It is thus different from knowing about someone, which does not require meeting and can be entirely one-sided. Macmurray calls it “knowledge of others as objects.”

Knowing someone well usually means being able to understand him easily, so that one knows at once when he is serious and when he is joking and one knows what he means even when he expresses himself in a misleading way. It means sensing how he is feeling, so that if he

95 Macmurray, Persons in Relation, p. 169.
is miserable but not showing it in any obvious way one sees the signs and reads them right. It means often being able to guess his views, intentions and reactions and knowing in advance whether something will make him angry or amuse him. This ability is not the result of analytical study but of communication and shared experience. The experience which is shared needs to be personal and serious—if one shares only unimportant experiences with someone, one does not come to know him or her well. Moreover, if you have had experiences with another person which were both personal and serious, but all joyful, you may know one side of him well but because you have never seen him in pain or under stress your knowledge of him is incomplete. If, on the other hand, you met someone when he was in deep trouble and he talked to you about it, and you listened, you may feel that you know him well but if you have been with him only at such times you only partly know him. For people to know one another they need to communicate with each other about, and to share with each other, both joyful and sorrowful personal experiences.

There are degrees in this knowledge. I said earlier than when one is having a personal conversation one is constantly thinking of things to say and deciding whether to say them or not. In this way we reveal more of ourselves to some people and less to others. Time, also, plays a role: as a rule, the more time we spend with other persons and the more experiences of different kinds we share, the better we know them (I say “as a rule” because it is possible to spend a short time with another person and at the end of it to know that person better than one knows others whom one has known all one’s life).

Certain authors, who have come to philosophy from science, say that human beings need to know what beings are, and they regard as unimportant or even unsound the kind of knowledge about which I have been talking. In this they are gravely mistaken. On the other hand, some personalist authors disparage knowing about people. This, too, is mistaken, for whenever we know someone personally we at the same time know something about him—as Macmurray says, personal relationships “necessarily contain a subordinate impersonal aspect.” Moreover, at times it can be important to obtain accurate scientific information about another person—if, for instance, some-

96 Ibid., p. 43.
one has a medical or psychological problem, it may be necessary to find out exactly what it is.

On the other hand, while we normally want to know certain things about people whom we know, and we generally learn them without directly trying to find them out, probing curiosity is generally unwelcome and unless there is a special reason for it no one likes to be analysed objectively or studied as if he were a case by someone whom he knows personally. Where a measure of reticence is in order—and this is the case in most relationships—people generally respect each other’s reserve and leave each other some privacy. Moreover, each respects the mystery of the other and does not attempt to take him or her psychologically to pieces as one might take apart a clock to see how it works.

Buber says that “in order to be able to go out to the other you must have the starting-place, you must have been, you must be, with yourself,”97 and R. D. Laing says that “a firm sense of one’s own autonomous identity is required in order that one may be related as one human being to another,”98 which implies that for two persons to know each other in a mature way each must have attained a measure of mental autonomy and know his or her own mind. They need to have fairly definite beliefs about those matters which are most important for an understanding of life, and at least in a general way they both need to know where they are going and what they expect from life. Generally speaking, I think, persons first form these beliefs and attitudes by listening to and observing adults, especially their parents. They may also be influenced by thinkers whose books they read or whose lectures they attend, and by novels, plays and films. Sometimes, perhaps too rarely, they sit by themselves in silence and think. But most of all they arrive at their conclusions in the course of interminable conversations with other young people like themselves. These immature conversations are of immense importance, but they are not Buberian dialogues or the kind of personal conversation which I discussed earlier, for participation in which it is necessary to have passed beyond them.

97 Buber, Dialogue, p. 21.
98 Laing, The Divided Self, p. 44.
12 Ecstatic love

When two persons have met and talked and know each other, they can—but do not necessarily—love each other as friends or with a sexual love. I shall here mainly describe this kind of love, which I call ecstatic love, in its highest degree, where there is full commitment.

Many authors assume that the only significant volitions are decisions to go into action and since love is a serious volition they assume that it is in essence a decision to perform an action, but they disagree about what the purpose of this action is. If its purpose is to benefit the other person, it cannot be merely to provide him or her with things, since that would imply that love attains only the periphery of the other. Perhaps to love people is to decide to educate, reform, save or in some other way improve them? Scheler forcefully says that to love another is not to regard him or her as the raw material out of which one hopes to make a great man or woman, and Martin D’Arcy says that “it is a sign of fatigue in love, a decline in its purity when it starts looking for something new or trying to teach and improve on the present.” Jaspers says succinctly: “He who feels that he is being educated, feels cheated of genuine love.” Another suggestion is made by Luijpen, who says that to love another is to make him or her exist as subject:

Love makes the other be subject. Love, when understood as active movement from subject to subject, constitutes a creative force. Love makes the other be as a subject. . . . The loved one receives his

99 As I will explain, “ecstatic” here does not mean what it usually means: see below, p. 126.
100 Scheler, The Nature of Sympathy, part 2, chap. 1, pp. 158-159.
102 Jaspers, Psychologie der Weltanschauungen, p. 129.
being-himself as a gift from the one who loves. There is a real causality, a real active influence, at work in the loving meeting of two subjects.\(^\text{103}\)

But I love someone whom I have found as a subject, so that he is a subject before I love him. De Finance says that at the heart of all love there is a “decree of creation”: “I love you,” he says in effect, means: “If you did not exist, and I had the power, I would make you exist.”\(^\text{104}\) This goes to the centre of the person, but if he did not exist I could not know him and how then could I decide to make him exist? As Maurice Nédoncelle says, love “exists only between beings who are already in existence.”\(^\text{105}\) The truth seems to me to be that love, as I said earlier,\(^\text{106}\) is acceptance and this is the taking of an interior attitude, not a decision to perform an action. In this case one person meets another, comes to know him, sees and appreciates his value and chooses to be strongly in favour of him. As Bonaventure said, in this kind of love “one accepts another’s deeds, approves of him and delights in his goodness.”\(^\text{107}\) Jaspers said: “One who loves another sees the other’s being and originally, groundlessly and unconditionally affirms it as being: he wills it to be.”\(^\text{108}\) Karl Rahner says that one who loves wills the loved person, acknowledges and approves of him, wills that he be and that he be what he is, because he is good in himself.\(^\text{109}\) Finally, Rollo May says: “Philia [love] does not require that we do anything for the beloved except accept him, be with him, and enjoy him.”\(^\text{110}\)

**Love is free**

As I said, meeting and communication both involve free choices.\(^\text{111}\) Love, too, is not involuntary but involves a free choice. Daniel Day Williams says:

\(^{103}\) Luijpen, *Phenomenology and Humanism*, p. 143.


\(^{105}\) Nédoncelle, *La reciprocité des consciences*, p. 91.

\(^{106}\) Above, p. 15.

\(^{107}\) Bonaventure, *Sent. 3*, d. 29, dub. 4.


\(^{109}\) Rahner, *De Gratia*, p. 264.

There is no absolute freedom in human experience, and elements of arbitrariness, accident and determinism enter into any relationship. But when we consider not only the beginning of love but its full course we must affirm freedom as one of its categorical conditions.  

Erich Fromm says:

Love cannot be separated from freedom and independence.... The basic premise of love is freedom and equality. Its premise is the strength, independence, integrity of the self, which can stand alone and bear solitude.... Love is a spontaneous act, and spontaneity means—also literally—the ability to act of one’s own free volition.

M. Scott Peck says:

We do not have to love. We choose to love. No matter how much we may think we are loving, if we are in fact not loving, it is because we have chosen not to love and therefore do not love despite our good intentions. On the other hand, whenever we do actually exert ourselves in the cause of spiritual growth [by this he means, when we love someone], it is because we have chosen to do so. The choice to love has been made.

Later he says: “The highest forms of love are inevitably totally free choices and not acts of conformity.” This is why if a person is irresistibly drawn to someone (especially someone whom he does not respect) and feels that he is a “slave of love” or in what Somerset Maugham calls “human bondage,” this is not love.

I said that while solidarity-love is free in the sense that we are able to choose whether to love or not, in it we do not have free choices of whom to love. Ecstatic love is different. While people do not have absolutely unlimited freedom in their choice of friends, because their

---

111 See above, pp. 110, 115.  
112 Williams, The Spirit and the Forms of Love, p. 115.  
114 Peck, The Road Less Travelled, p. 83.  
115 Ibid., p. 139.  
116 See above, pp.82, 102.
choice is limited to those persons with whom they have an affinity, this gives most people plenty of room to manoeuvre and when people who are attuned to one another meet they are usually perfectly free to enter into communication in a way that might lead to a friendship, or not. That is, we are free to choose whom to love in this way.

Finally, as a general rule, where ecstatic love is concerned, no one can say to another: “I have a right to your love and so you are obliged to love me.” Also, no one is obliged to accept any other person’s offer of friendship or sexual love. In this other sense of the word, then, ecstatic love is free.

Love is not in essence an emotion, because (for one thing) emotions come and go whereas love abides and if at a particular moment I am distracted or weary and do not have any strong feelings about another person this does not mean that temporarily I do not love him or her. Love, however, always involves emotions and it often involves very strong ones—a feeling of pleasure when one is with the other person or even when one thinks of him or her, anxiety if the other is in danger, sadness if the other is hurt, delight if he or she is successful in some enterprise and, above all, happiness in loving and being loved. At times it is necessary to say that love is not purely and simply a feeling, but it needs also to be said that a completely unemotional love would be a strange phenomenon, or does not exist.

The other

When I love another person my love goes primarily to the other’s inmost self and I freely and emotionally accept him or her, primarily as a thinking, feeling and willing subject. If intellectual and emotional affinity is needed for communication, it is even more necessary for this kind of love. If, for instance, two people are getting to know one another and one of them hears the other saying to someone else, “In the end, money is more important than religion or love,” he may say to himself, “There speaks a man after my own heart” or alternatively (and this is what I hope he would say), “I could never be friends with that person.” Also, if one of them is excitable and the other finds this
extremely irritating, or if for some other reason they get on each other’s nerves, they can have solidarity-love for each other but they cannot become friends.

Love (of this kind) is also consent to another person as an individual or as unique. Every being is both one of a number of kinds of being and a unique individual, and it is possible to be interested in him, her or it either as one or as the other. In most cases, to find out in which way one is interested in a being one has only to ask, “Would it make a significant difference to me if this being were removed and its place taken by another being of the same kind?” For instance, when I read a book it would usually make no difference to me if the particular copy which I have been reading were removed and another copy of the same book put in its place, which shows that I am interested in the book in my hands not as a particular or individual being but as one of a kind of being. I have, however, some books which were given to me as presents and it would make a significant difference to me if I were to lose them, even if I were able to buy other copies of the same books: this shows that I am interested in them as particular or individual beings, which as such are irreplaceable. In a similar way, I appreciate a motor mechanic because he is skilful, quick and honest. If his place were to be taken by another who had the same qualities, it would be for me as if no change had occurred: so I am interested in him not as an individual but as one of a certain kind of human being. If, however, someone is my friend, he is not interchangeable with any other person. If he goes away and someone else comes, I may make friends with the newcomer but my friendship for the one will not transfer itself to the other in the same way as my interest in a book transfers itself from one copy to another. That is, as I said at the start of this paragraph, love is consent to another as an individual human being and so as unique. Kierkegaard saw this clearly and said that one loves “actual individual men.” Scheler saw it, too, and said that love is directed to “the individual centre of being in every spiritual person.” Jaspers saw it and said:

There is singularity [Einmaligkeit] in love. What I love is not general: it is something, or someone, for whose presence there can be no substitution. All loving and being loved depends on the specific instance, and only in this uniqueness can it not be lost.¹¹⁹

Finally, Abraham Maslow says that “all serious writers on the subject of ideal or healthy love have stressed the affirmation of the other’s individuality” and “the essential respect for his individuality and unique personality.”¹²⁰ This means that neither friendship nor sexual love is for another person as a possessor of this or that quality or as a member of this or that group or larger whole.

In being a particular individual, himself or herself, the other person is very definitely not me and I love him or her as another person. Many authors shy away from this. Peck, for instance, says: “It will become clear that not only do self-love and love for others go hand in hand but that ultimately they are indistinguishable,”¹²¹ and some authors who discuss altruism say that “the type of altruism which is significant today is the rational altruism based on psychological egoism.”¹²² They maintain that we are self-seeking beings who can identify ourselves with others to such an extent that when something happens to them we feel as though it were happening to us. If we do this, they say, we can do things for others feeling as though we were doing them for ourselves. William J. O’Neill, whom I quoted a moment ago, says:

> Altruism is neither the opposite nor the contrary of egoism. It is merely one way in which egoism manifests itself. It is, in essence, that type of self-gratification which is achieved by identifying oneself with, and subsequently participating in, the well-being of others on a psychological level.¹²³

This, I believe, is quite false where the love which I am describing is concerned. We love others not as ourselves but as others.

¹¹⁹ Jaspers, Philosophy, II, 243.
¹²⁰ Maslow, Motivation and Personality, p. 252.
¹²¹ Peck, The Road Less Travelled, p. 83.
¹²² O’Neill, With Charity Toward None, p. 200.
¹²³ Ibid., pp. 201-202.
I said earlier that for people to be able to communicate they need to have an intellectual and emotional affinity. This usually requires a certain degree of similarity. Since, however, love is for another person as *other*, and since dissimilarity between persons keeps them constantly aware of each other’s otherness, a certain amount of dissimilarity can be good for love, and we all see strong friendships between people who are in some ways unalike, while sexual love is between a man and a woman, who are different, and it sometimes unites a dour man and a bright woman or a mercurial man and a quiet, steady woman. Perhaps ecstatic love flourishes best when there is a nice balance of affinity and dissimilarity or when there is some dissimilarity but not so much as to trouble the affinity. (May I say here that the central thesis of this book is *not* that there are two kinds of love, one based on similarity and the other on dissimilarity? Solidarity-love can be between dissimilar people and ecstatic love, while it can be helped by dissimilarity, is not based on it.)

In the fifth century a Syrian monk wrote some works in Greek which he presented as being by Denis the Areopagite, a man who is mentioned in passing in Acts 17:34. In the ninth century the Byzantine Emperor gave a copy of this monk’s writings to the German Emperor, Louis the Pious, and they were soon translated into Latin. In those uncritical times they were believed to be Christian classics equal in age to much of the New Testament, and for centuries in Western or Latin-speaking Europe they were copied and recopied and read and reread, with great reverence and no suspicion. The pseudo-Denis used the word “ecstasy” (from the Greek ex-stasis, or standing out) for the state of soul of a lover who is hardly aware of himself because his whole attention and his feelings are fixed on the other person whom he loves, so that psychologically he is not in himself but in the other. He said: “Love is ecstatic, not allowing lovers to belong to themselves but making them belong to their beloveds.”124 Thomas Aquinas, who had read Denis in translation and who like everyone else had great respect for him, often quoted this and himself said that in love “the lover is in the beloved inasmuch as he regards the values and disvalues of the beloved as his own, and the will of the beloved as his own, so that as it were in his beloved he is affected by the good and ill

124 Denis, *De divinis nominibus*, c. 4, # 13; PG, 3,712.
that befall the beloved.”

Another medieval author described ecstasy with a play on words which can be translated into English:

Love draws the lover out of himself and makes him dwell in the beloved and settles him intimately there…. Thus the soul is more truly where it loves than where it lives.

Donne described the experience in “The Ecstasy” and other poems. Hegel, in an early period of his life, said:

The basic principle of the empirical character is love, that has a certain analogy with the understanding inasmuch as love finds itself in other human beings, or much rather the lover, forgetting himself, lifts himself out of his own existence and as it were lives, feels and is active in others.

Finally, every poem and song about a person’s heart being stolen from him or of a lover’s heart being in his beloved is about ecstasy. I hope it is clear that in this context “ecstasy” does not precisely mean an emotional state of exaltation or what is now called “a high,” which may involve awareness of nothing outside the self.

Ecstatic love is for the other, full stop or period, not for the other for the self. That is, ecstatic love is altruistic, as some of the old pagan writers saw and as Bossuet and some other Christians, who should have been ashamed of themselves, did not see. Aristotle repeatedly said that in true friendship “we love friends for their sakes,” not for anything to be got from them. He said that we “would love them even if no good came to us from them.”

Cicero said the same: “To love...
is simply to have affection for the person himself whom you love, not from need and not for gain.” Among moderns Antoine de Saint-Exupéry says: “True love begins when nothing is looked for in return.” It follows from this that ecstatic love does not spring in the first place from need and that “I need you” is not a way of saying “I love you.”

When persons love each other they give each other their attention, and help if it is needed, but deeper than this they give each other themselves. As Vladimir Jankélévitch says,

> What the generous self bestows on the other is not the mine, but the me. The self gives itself—that is to say, the entire I-subject gives himself entirely.

When Jankélévitch says that the I-subject or person gives himself entirely he is talking about full ecstatic love, where there are no limits other than those of morality to what each person would be willing to do for the other and where each would be willing to die for the other. People, however, sometimes love each other less fully than this and then what they would be willing to do depends on the degree of their love.

**Inexplicable?**

Explanations have to start somewhere, with something which needs no explanation. I discussed earlier the Psychological Egoists who maintain that in everything we do we seek some benefit for ourselves on utility dissolves as soon as its profit ceases, for the friends did not love each other, but what they got out of each other” (book 8, chap. 4, 1157 a 14-16). I am sure that if the Greeks had had inverted commas Aristotle would have talked about “friendships” of utility to indicate that while ongoing relationships of mutual utility were called “friendships” (which is why he brings them in), they were in his eyes pseudo-friendships.

---

130 Cicero, *De amicitia*, 27,100.
(this, they believe, needs no explanation since it is reasonable in itself). These authors “explain” all behaviour by finding out how it benefits the agent,\textsuperscript{133} and if they see people being generous they say that their ultimate aim is to obtain some benefit for themselves. This of course means that while, to their own satisfaction, they explain loving behaviour, they deny the possibility of altruism and the validity of the description of love which I have given.

Many other authors deny this, affirm with me that love is altruistic, and go on to say that love is inexplicable, by which they mean that it is pointless to look for an explanation of love because there isn’t one. Pascal said in effect that love is not rational and that “one does not prove that one must be loved by methodically setting out the reasons for love [and showing that they apply to oneself]: that would be ridiculous.”\textsuperscript{134} Jaspers says that “love is the most incomprehensible reality of absolute consciousness, because it is the most groundless,”\textsuperscript{135} Jankélévitch says that a person is loved because he is who he is and he goes on: “What kind of a reason is that? Well, it is just the absence of a reason that is the reason,”\textsuperscript{136} and I myself, in \textit{Love and the Person}, said that love is inexplicable.\textsuperscript{137} Some authors have gone a step further and said that love is positively irrational or mad. “Love,” they say, “is almost a dark passion; it is a fire and a wound; it is violent and sacrificial; it cares nothing for reason, because it is madness and a rapture.”\textsuperscript{138} The defenders of the Ecstatic Theory of love in the middle ages\textsuperscript{139} were particularly prone to indulge in this kind of language: for instance, early in the twelfth century William of Saint Thierry said, quoting Paul, “Listen to these words of madness: ‘If we were out of our minds it was for God’.”\textsuperscript{140}

\textsuperscript{133} See above, pp. 35-38.
\textsuperscript{134} Pascal, \textit{Pensées}, # 298.
\textsuperscript{136} Jankélévitch, \textit{Traité des vertus}, p. 465.
\textsuperscript{137} Cowburn, \textit{Love and the Person}, pp. 147-148.
\textsuperscript{138} D’Arcy, \textit{The Mind and Heart of Love}, p. 87. This is not D’Arcy’s own view.
\textsuperscript{139} This theory will be expounded later: see below, pp. 232-233.
\textsuperscript{140} William of Saint Thierry, \textit{On the Nature and Dignity of Love}, ch. 2, p. 17. The quotation is from 2 Cor 5:13; the RSV has “If we are beside ourselves” and the NJB has “If we have been unreasonable,” but the point here is not what Paul meant but what William thought he meant.
that according to this theory (which he rejected) violence or irrationality is an essential feature of love.\footnote{Rousselot, *The Problem of Love in the Middle Ages*, pp. 189-196. This book is about the two medieval theories of love which will be discussed below, pp. 229-233.} However, the explanation of an action is found in a value and while it is true that I have value and that seeing my value I love myself and do things for myself, it is also true that other persons have value and that seeing their value I can love them. That is, we do not have to choose, on the one hand, between explaining love of others in terms of self-interest (which amounts to explaining it away) and, on the other hand, declaring it to be inexplicable or even irrational: it is perfectly explicable in terms of the value of persons.

This does not explain why I love some persons and not others, since all persons have value. Well, I cannot even see all persons and of those whom I do see I have a natural affinity with, and so can expect to meet and really talk with, only a limited number. Hence it is easy to see why, though I can have solidarity-love for everyone in the world, I cannot have ecstatic love for many persons. But this still leaves unexplained why, of people I have come across with whom I have an affinity, I have chosen to love certain persons rather than others. That remains a mystery, that of free will.
13 The other person’s nature and qualities

If I admire someone who is good-looking, a great athlete or highly musical, and another person comes along who is better-looking, a greater athlete or more musical, I automatically admire him or her more. But if I love someone who is good-looking or musical and someone else comes along who is better-looking or more musical, I do not find myself automatically loving him or her at all, let alone more. This is because while we admire people because of their qualities, we do not love our friends as possessors of their qualities: we love them as themselves.

About sixty years ago “the person” or “the I” was sometimes thought to be a sort of spiritual entity at the centre of each human being, to which the nature and qualities are attached, and it was thought that when I love a person I go through his qualities and nature to this centre. It was then said that we love the person, not the nature or qualities. I myself may seem to have had this idea in my mind when I said that we love a person primarily in his “inmost self.” The person, however, is the whole intellectual and volitional being, not a part of the being, even the central core; when I love a person, then, generally I love him as a particular whole intellectual and volitional being. This means that while I do not love him precisely because he is, for instance, decisive, his decisiveness is included in what I love; if a man loves a beautiful woman he does not love her precisely because she is beautiful, but he loves her beauty because it is hers; and we all appreciate the good qualities of the persons whom we love and they are included in our love. Of these, the most important are those which depend on free-will and are the most personal: generosity, kindness and considerateness; decisiveness, sense of purpose and reliability; sense of humour and capacity for enjoyment; sympathy; and integrity.

142 See above, p. 27.
and moral goodness. For love these are more significant than, say, mathematical ability or physical strength, which might be of primary importance when someone is needed for a job of calculation or lifting. And the flaws which most of all make it difficult to love a person are flaws of character such as meanness or jealousy.

If persons have particular needs—if they are inclined to melancholy and often need to be cheered up or if they are temporarily sick and need to have some business done for them—these, as we have seen, can inspire a quasi-parental love in others but they cannot be the basis of ecstatic love. The lover, however, normally sees these needs and, if he or she can, provides what is wanted.

A greater problem is presented by defects or unusual limitations in the loved person. It has been said that love is blind, and one way round the problem of defects in the loved person is not to see them and if someone points them out to refuse to admit that they exist. If, for instance, a girl falls in love with a lazy man and someone says to her, “I hope you realise that he’s bone lazy,” she may sharply say, “Nonsense, he’s only been conserving his energy” and refuse to talk any more to the friend who was only trying to help. This is dangerous because it brings self-deception into the love and one day it will become impossible to sustain the illusion any longer. Jaspers is right when he says: “Love is clear-sighted. Anyone who loves another and feels that the other has illusions about him does not feel that he himself is loved.” Another solution is to convince oneself that the defect is not a misfortune but a good thing. For example, a man who has fallen in love with a blind woman might tell himself that her blindness will make her more dependent on him, and less likely to be unfaithful to him, than a sighted woman would be, and for this reason to be positively in favour of it. That would be perverse. What love requires is that the person see the defect, see that it is a defect, and nevertheless accept it. If, for instance, a woman loves a man who has a bad stutter she can hardly regard it as a good thing but she can accept it and, having done so, habitually wait patiently until he has said what he has

143 See above, p. 53.
144 Jaspers, Psychologie der Weltanschauungen, p. 129.
to say. Also, if a married man is crippled, he for his own happiness
needs to accept his condition and to love him wholly his wife, too,
must accept it; and while it will cause them practical difficulties
whether they accept it or not, it will not, if both accept it, be a
psychological problem for either of them and it will not affect their
love for each other.

Clear-sighted acceptance is not weak betrayal of ideals or ignoble
surrender after ignominious defeat: on the contrary, it is often noble,
requires strength of character and generosity, and it may represent
victory, not defeat. If, for instance, a woman whose husband has
become crippled and deformed accepts his condition and appearance,
and loves him as much as she did when he was strong and handsome,
she achieves a victory over adversity and she attains greatness.

I need to add, in conclusion, that there are times when we ought not
to accept things in people whom we love, and a general rule might be
that we ought not to accept things in them which they themselves
ought not to accept. If, for instance, someone is beginning to put on
a lot of weight because he is eating too much and not taking enough
exercise, he ought not to say, “I’m getting fat and I accept that,” and
neither should his friends. Most especially, moral evil ought never to
be accepted. This creates problems. If you find yourself in conversa-
tion with someone who you know takes bribes and refuses justice to
people who will not bribe him, should you be willing to be friends with
him? If a girl who knows the facts about this man finds herself
attracted to him and he begins to court her, should she keep him at a
distance and make sure that she does not come to love him? Whatever
the answers to these questions are, we ought not to accept dishonesty
as we might accept a stutter and so we are not free to love such a person
completely—and the incompleteness of our love is his fault, not ours.
14 Ecstatic love is mutual and free: the relationship

People have told of a love so pure that from the person whom he or she loves the lover asks for nothing whatever, not even love. Kierkegaard said: “The true lover regards the very requirement of reciprocity to be a contamination, a devaluation, and loving without the reward of reciprocated love to be the highest blessedness,”145 and in The Brothers Karamazov Katerina writes to Dimitri, whom she says she loves: “I don’t care if you don’t love me. It makes no difference, only be my husband.”146 From experience, however, we know that while unrequited love exists it is anything but the highest blessedness and there is no such thing as a one-sided friendship. Katerina’s words, therefore, ring false in our ears, as they did in Dimitri’s, since he said: “She loves her own virtue and not me.”147 The fact of the matter is that if you love someone with ecstatic love you necessarily want the other person to listen to you and tell you about himself or herself; you want the other to accept your gift of yourself and you want the other’s self to be given to you: you want to be loved. Toner says that

what, before all else, the one who loves with personal love feels a need and desire for is a return of personal love. Further, the intensity of this need and desire seems to be proportionate to the intensity and purity of the personal love.148

In a word, ecstatic love by its very nature needs to be mutual.

147 Ibid., p. 135.
148 Toner, Love and Friendship, p. 286.
Does this mean that it is not completely altruistic? Andrew Greeley, having said that friendship is “essentially and primarily a gift,” goes on: “The gift is not a disinterested one,” and “We give ourselves because we want the other.” Well, first, a gift that is not disinterested (altruistic) is a contradiction in terms. Second, Greeley has put things in reverse order: we do not love because we want to be loved, we want to be loved because we love. That is, when I first met someone who is now a friend I did not say to myself, “I need to be loved and it looks to me as though if I love this person he or she will love me and so satisfy that need”; I did not, to use Greeley’s words, give myself because I wanted the other; instead, I talked with the other, we came to know one another in our inmost selves and going out of myself I chose to love the other for his or her sake; and, because I loved the other, I wanted the other to love me and I still want that. That is, ecstatic love really is altruistic or directed in the first place towards the other; and yet it makes us want to be loved.

As we saw, ecstatic love is always free; therefore a person in authority, who can appoint someone to be his adviser, cannot appoint anyone to be his friend, and the most absolute ruler who wants to marry one of his subjects cannot order her to love him and marry him. Moreover, whereas parents and children are entitled to demand each other’s love as a right, no one can claim ecstatic love as a right, at the beginning of a relationship. Furthermore, if a person could somehow control other people’s wills it would be impossible for him to use this power to make someone else love him, because anything so coerced would not be love. If, then, I would like to be friends with another person I can only offer friendship, hoping that I will be accepted and that the other will give himself or herself to me in friendship. When relationships of ecstatic love form, sometimes one person takes the initiative and the other responds; at other times they move simultaneously towards each other. An agreement is made which in the case of sexual love eventually becomes explicit in the marriage vows; in friendship it is generally unspoken but, for all that, understood.

150 See above, p. 43.
151 In the paragraph above I say of ecstatic love what I said earlier about love in general: see p. 36.
Ecstatic love is mutual & free

Equality

Aristotle repeatedly said that friendship is a relationship of equality,\textsuperscript{152} and Cicero said: “The great thing in friendship is being equal to an inferior” (he might have added: or to a superior).\textsuperscript{153} St Jerome said: “Friendship either finds men equal or makes them so”;\textsuperscript{154} William of Auvergne said: “Friends, as friends, are equals”;\textsuperscript{155} and Jaspers said that unconditional communication develops only when in the depths of their being self meets self on an equal footing.\textsuperscript{156}

This does not mean that for two persons to love one another with ecstatic love they must be of the same age and equally robust, intelligent, well-educated, serious, humorous, good-looking and rich. Neither does it mean that differences between them must balance each other, so that their excellence, all things considered, is the same. Rather, it means that if one has superior qualities he does not look down on the other or feel more important; if one is more intelligent he does not lecture the other at length; and if one comes from a bigger country or a nobler family he does not enjoy “the tranquil consciousness of effortless superiority” and constantly make the other feel unworthy of him. Likewise, if one is less gifted he neither envies the other’s qualities nor humbly feels that the other is above him. This requires maturity, self-respect, humility and self-love in both partners.

In some organisations, people on different levels are not allowed to become friends and if two people on the same level are friends and one of them is promoted he or she is expected to end the friendship. For instance, in many armies there can be no friendships between officers and common soldiers, so that if a soldier becomes an officer he must leave his old friends; and in some churches when a priest becomes a bishop he is expected to drop his priest friends, join a friendly group of bishops and take his holidays with them. It is, however, possible for

\textsuperscript{152} Aristotle, \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, book 8, chap. 5, 1157 b 36.
\textsuperscript{153} Cicero, \textit{De amicitia}, 19,69.
\textsuperscript{154} “Amicitia aut pares accipit aut facit” (Jerome, \textit{Comm. in Micheam}, book 2, chap. 7; \textit{PL}, 25,1219).
\textsuperscript{155} William of Auvergne, \textit{De Moribus}, chap. 4, p. 208.
\textsuperscript{156} Jaspers, \textit{Philosophy}, II, 84.
two persons to be friends when one has authority over the other, or is above him or her in an organisation, because they can distinguish between on the one hand their dealings with each other as members of the organisation, who are not on an equal footing, and on the other hand their conversations and other activities as friends, who as such are equals. Suppose, for instance, that a group of men work together under a director, that they and their wives become friends, and that after some years one of them is made the director. At work he now tells the others what to do, they do it with due deference, and he may at times have to criticise their work. If, however, he and his wife and they and their wives come together as before for a social evening, they can be friends provided it is understood that in this situation he has absolutely no right to give orders and that in conversation they must on no account defer to him. Similarly, it is possible for a man and a woman who are not on an equal footing at work to be in love with one another. When they are doing their respective jobs, one tells the other what to do and the other does it; away from the work-place, however, or in private and personal conversations at the work-place, they treat each other as equals.¹⁵⁷

The ecstatic union

When two persons love each other ecstatically, they are united. Some authors have said that when persons love each other they so much want to be united that they desire to fuse and to become no longer two persons or selves distinct from each other but only one. Aristophanes says this in Plato’s Symposium,¹⁵⁸ in the middle ages the author of De adhaerendo Deo said that one who loves “wants to make himself one

¹⁵⁷ Rousselot disagreed with all this. He attacked the Ecstatic Theory on the ground that it is based on an analysis of friendship of equals and he said: “To decide the essence of love, equality must be replaced by submission, in particular that which separates Creator and creature, and all must be measured by this universal prototype…. The more a love (une amitié) is disparate, the closer it approaches to the norm—the exact opposite of what Aristotle said.” (The Problem of Love, p. 112.)

¹⁵⁸ Plato, Symposium, 191 A sqq.
Ecstatic love is mutual & free

with the loved, and if it be possible he wants to be the same as the loved,”¹⁵⁹ a character in William Golding’s Free Fall says: “I want fusion and identity—I want to understand and be understood—oh God, Beatrice, Beatrice, I love you—I want to be you!”¹⁶⁰ and a poet has written that the soul’s desire is for

\[
\text{Some infinitely inner fusion,} \\
\text{As wave with water, flame with fire,} \\
\text{Let me dream once the dear illusion} \\
\text{That I am You, oh, heart’s desire.}¹⁶¹
\]

Some authors have said that because this fusion cannot be achieved love is an agony—they say, for instance, that “the lover and the beloved stand over against each other as persons, and it is this separation which causes agony.”¹⁶²

All this, however, is wrong. When I love another person I want him to be and hence I can have no wish to assimilate him into myself, in the process destroying him as a person in his own right; nor do I want him to cease to think and act for himself but always to accept my ideas and to let me make all the decisions, first because that would mean his destruction as an autonomous person and since I love him I do not want that, and second because if that happened he would be no company for me and I might as well be alone. Likewise, I do not wish suicidally to merge into him, in the process ceasing to exist as myself, and I do not intend to stop thinking and making decisions but to adopt all his ideas and act always as he decides, for then I might as well not exist for all the good my company would be to him and moreover he would be deeply frustrated because loving me he wants me to go on being myself. The special characteristic of the ecstatic union is that in it two persons, even as they are united, continue to be distinct from one another: they become one while remaining two. Scott Peck says:

A major characteristic of genuine love is that the distinction between oneself and the other is always maintained and preserved.

¹⁵⁹ De adhaerendo Deo, chap. 12; Of Cleaving to God, chap. 12.
¹⁶⁰ Golding, Free Fall, chap. 4, p. 81.
¹⁶¹ Quoted in D’Arcy, The Mind and Heart of Love, p. 233.
¹⁶² Ibid., p. 87.
The genuine lover always perceives the beloved as someone who has a totally separate identity. Moreover, the genuine lover always respects and even encourages this separateness and the unique individuality of the beloved.163

(I would not use the word “separate” here, since it often implies physical distance, as when we say that in some refugee camps husbands and wives are separated, and it sometimes implies a breach in a relationship, as when we say that a husband and wife have separated. “Distinct” does not have these connotations.) Fromm puts the matter succinctly: “In love the paradox occurs that two beings become one and yet remain two.”164

It might be argued that when two things are joined, the more difficult it is to see two beings in the combination, the more united they are. On this principle, oxygen and hydrogen are very united in water, because it is impossible to see either of them; the notes of a chord are less united because they can be distinguished, though not easily; and persons who love each other are hardly united at all because wherever they go everyone sees two beings, but the more they think, speak and act as one so that the less they think of themselves, and the less others think of them, as two people, the more united they are. In personal life, however, this principle does not apply. When persons love each other they both retain their own individual identities and their own peculiar characters; each remains distinct from the other and sees the other person as another person, whom he or she wants to go on being another person; and yet, if comparisons are to be made, in the ecstatic union they are far more united than oxygen and hydrogen in water, which a little electricity can separate. The truth is that individuality and relatedness are not opposites such that the more there is of the one the less there can be of the other; on the contrary, the more beings are highly individual the more deeply they can be involved with other beings and the more strongly they can be united with others. The ecstatic union is the solution to the problem of the

One and the Many in the form that this takes when “the Many” is many persons.\textsuperscript{165}

It has been said that “person” implies not existence for self but existence for others, so that to be fully persons we must strive to love others \textit{and not ourselves}. This holds up a fake ideal of the love of others. If when two persons love each other neither of them exists for himself or herself but only for the other, their wills are at cross-purposes and the relationship does not make sense. If, however, each lives both for himself or herself and for the other, then each of the two persons lives for both persons and their wills coincide. Moreover, each has the joy of loving and being loved by another person with an existence, a mind and will of his or her own. Maslow says that mature persons are capable of great love for others, but “throughout the most intense and ecstatic love affairs, these people remain themselves and remain ultimately masters of themselves as well, living by their own standards even though enjoying each other intensely”;\textsuperscript{166} and Rollo May says that “friendship and [sexual] love require that we participate in the meaning-matrix of the other but without surrendering our own.”\textsuperscript{167}

\section*{Maturity and self-love in ecstatic love}

In my earlier analysis of giving I said that a gift is necessarily something which the giver values (if one allows someone to have one’s rubbish, I said, it is not, strictly speaking, a gift).\textsuperscript{168} To give oneself to another in love, then, one needs to value oneself. Also, for ecstatic love one must accept the love of the other person for oneself, and only a person

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Scholastic philosophers (such as Rousselot) used to maintain that whenever two entities combine to form one, they combine as act and potency; that is, one is the active and determining factor and the other is in itself passive and indeterminate (Rousselot, \textit{The Problem of Love}, p. 113n). This led them to maintain that for a married couple to be united it is necessary that the husband be active and the wife passive, and that he determine the character of the couple. The principle, I maintain, is valid of “physical” unities, not of personal unions like marriage.
\item Maslow, \textit{Motivation and Personality}, p. 257.
\item May, \textit{Love and Will}, p. 262.
\item Above, p. 35.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
who has respect and love for himself or herself can agree to being respected and loved by someone else. As Gaylin says, “only when we value ourselves are we able to value the feelings that others have for us, and only when we see ourselves as worthy enough can we allow ourselves the freedom to have feelings for others.” I said earlier that self-love is necessary for love of others; this is most especially true of ecstatic love.

While solidarity-love, in some forms, goes from strength to weakness or from weakness to strength, in principle ecstatic love goes from one strength to another and back again. I have heard an equivalence asserted between weakness and loveableness, and an incompatibility asserted between love and power; it is, however, the opposite of the truth to say that the weaker you are, and because you are weak, the more you will be able to love or the more others will want to love you, with sexual love or friendship.

Children have playmates. Harry Stack Sullivan says that at around the age of ten a child generally has a chum, someone of his own age and sex from whom he is inseparable. Teenagers have companions who are more than chums, and they often have romances. All these relationships are of great importance—Sullivan says that if a child does not have a chum between eight and twelve he will not be capable of heterosexual love later—but they are not, except incipiently, ecstatic love. Toner says that when one person loves another and desires to be loved in return, this desire does not spring from an inadequacy or lack in him or her. On the contrary,

those who are most fully developed as persons, who love most unselfishly and intensely, and who have the least need of being loved in order to love, are the very ones who most need and desire a return of personal love.

In a word, ecstatic love needs maturity. This is why, when people are approaching maturity, they gradually separate themselves from their parents and it is precisely during this time that they form relationships which imitate ecstatic love and prepare them for it.

---

15 The future

When people love one another with ecstatic love, they share serious personal experiences, either by having them together or by telling each other about them. When they are friends, their communication may be intermittent; when they have a sexual love for each other, if all goes well they get married and live together. As the years go by, they come to know each other better and better, their sense of belonging to each other grows stronger, their trust in each other becomes more secure, their love becomes deeper and their ecstatic union becomes greater. In making such a love-relationship, time seems to be of the essence and it is experienced, for once, not as an enemy but as a friend.

Of the serious personal experiences which friends and sexual couples have, some are joyful and others are sorrowful. Both kinds are necessary. Every life has its sorrows and when a person is afflicted in some way and his spouse and friends are intensely with him, feeling his pain, they and he are afterwards more closely united than before. If two people are afflicted together by some sorrow—if, for instance, a married couple’s child dies—they may be tempted to turn away from each other and feel miserable separately, and if they do this their union weakens; if, however, they turn towards one another, offering and accepting sympathy, it is made stronger. Life has joys, too, and when these are shared by spouses or friends their loves are strengthened. Which kind of experience, one may ask, is of greater value in this regard, the joyful or the sorrowful? What more strongly unites people, shared joy or sorrow? On the understanding that both are necessary and that each has its own value, I venture to answer: joy.173

---

173 See above, p. 97.
Conflict

Konrad Lorenz observes that among beasts “there is no love without aggression,” and he says that “aggression in very many animals and probably also in man is an essential component of personal friendship.” Anthony Storr echoes this: “It is only when intense aggressiveness exists between two individuals that love can arise.” This does not mean that an ideal married couple alternate between fighting each other and making passionate love or that friends fight, are reconciled, fight again, are reconciled again and so on indefinitely. It means that the person with no aggressiveness cannot love, because love requires vitality and strength of character and these also entail a capacity, indeed a tendency, to fight for what one believes in and feels strongly about.

Also, conflict is to be expected in almost any love-relationship, as can be seen by asking what ought to happen when two persons who love one another disagree about something or have conflicting wishes. It cannot be ideal for one of them always to be a doormat over which the other walks, so that always the same one’s ideas are accepted and always his or her will is done. Neither can the ideal be for both of them simultaneously to give up their ideas and wishes, since that would lead to an impasse every time. The ideal must therefore be for both of them to be reasonably strong-minded and determined, and this necessarily leads to an argument, which is a form of conflict. If conflict is avoided, or if a bad conflict occurs, there is trouble. What is needed is a good conflict, in which there is complete mutual respect and no personal animosity. In such a conflict, neither person takes unfair advantage of the other: if, for instance, one is a fast talker and the other is slow to get his thoughts together and express them, the former gives the slower one all the time he needs to argue for what he believes to be right. Ideally, sometimes one and sometimes the other wins. Like dissimilarity of nature, such conflicts actually help a relationship by vividly reminding each person that the other is, precisely, an other person. I believe that Fromm is right when he says: “Just as it is customary for

---

175 Ibid., p. 239.
176 Storr, *Human Aggression*, p. 36.
people to believe that pain and sadness should be avoided under all circumstances, they believe that love means the absence of any conflict,” and goes on to say that this is a mistake. Real conflicts, he says, “are not destructive. They lead to clarification, they produce a catharsis from which both persons emerge with more knowledge and more strength.”

In larger communities, also, conflicts are to be expected and when people have different ideas about something which affects the life of the community it is usually better not to try to avoid conflict. In a bad conflict, there is mutual hostility, insults are exchanged, unfair tactics are used, tempers are aroused, people cease to be rational and the community enters a state of civil war. But if there is no open conflict at all there is unresolved half-hidden conflict, there are frequent skirmishes and other clashes which resolve nothing, and the community is like a simmering kettle on the point of boiling over. In a good conflict there is mutual respect, arguments are presented rationally, the procedures are fair to all parties, everyone listens to what the opponents are saying and seriously considers it, and in most cases an agreement is reached which everyone, or almost everyone, genuinely accepts. A community which successfully lives through a good conflict emerges happier, more mature and indeed more united.

Objectivisation or expression

Persons need to express outwardly what they think and feel inwardly. We express what is in our minds and hearts by speaking and also at times by writing things down—when we write things down they come out of our heads and onto pieces of paper which are tangibly there. We also express our inner selves in physical actions, including smiles and frowns, agitated walking up and down and dejected motionlessness. We collect things which reflect our inner selves and identify ourselves so closely with them that in showing them to others we reveal ourselves to them. Finally, persons produce works which embody

177 Fromm, *The Art of Loving*, pp. 74-75.
their inner selves, and Schacht says that a person needs “to give himself an objective embodiment in the world in the form of products which reflect his personality.”

We have seen that whereas solidarity-love presupposes an objective link between the persons concerned, ecstatic love does not. It is initially a subjective experience, and ecstatic union is also a subjective phenomenon. Ecstatic love and the ecstatic union must, then, be objectivised or externalised. Love is externalised in spoken words, and saying “I love you” is tremendously important because afterwards the person can say: “It’s out now, I’ve said it.” It is externalised in written words, which can be kept, and people keep old letters, even if they do not re-read them, because they feel that their love is in them. People externalise their love in gestures and other expressive actions and in the way they habitually behave towards each other. They do it by playing games together and by going to entertainments or to other people’s places together and especially by eating and drinking together, for, as Menninger says,

being given food is the first expression of love which the child understands; it is his introduction to love. Hence the symbolic value of being fed remains high throughout life. In the unconscious, Food = Love. It is understandable, therefore, why the dinner party or the social luncheon, for all its banality, is a perpetual medium of friendship.

They also give each other things. When a person takes a possession which has personal significance for him, so that it is like part of himself, and gives it to someone whom he loves, he vividly externalises the gift which he makes to the other of himself; and when the other accepts it gratefully and places it in his own personal zone, he accepts the giver into his self. When a gift from another person is in a room, it is a visible sign of his love, in it he is present and his love fills the room. When persons give each other presents over a period, each finds whenever he goes into the other’s zone that he is already there, in the things which he has given, and his own home is full of the presence and

love of the other. Thus through material things ecstatic union is objectivised.

In parenthesis, I will say that hostility can also be expressed through things. If things which are precious to us are stolen or deliberately damaged, we feel that we have been hurt and sometimes after a burglary people feel that they have been violated. If a man has a collection of rare LPs, to which he listens rarely but which he greatly enjoys owning, and if after he and his wife have had a fierce argument she smashes them, she symbolically kills him as she throws them down and with all her force stamps on them. Peter Berger tells of a man who finds that an enemy has stuck a knife into the wall above the head of his bed, and he says that the knife sticking out from the wall is “an objectivation of human subjectivity,” a visible sign of the enemy’s malevolence; in it, so long as it remains there, the enemy is present and his hatred fills the room.\textsuperscript{180}

I said earlier that ecstatic love involves equality and the question arises: Does this mean that the persons have to give each other goods and services of equal value? Suppose that a man and a woman went out together for some months and that he then said to her: “I have added up the cost of what I have given to you, deducted the cost of what you have given to me, and I find an excess on my side of, in round numbers, $850. I just thought I should let you know that you are falling behind.” She would see at once that he did not love her, because love does not keep accounts which measure what goes out against what comes in. Each gives what he or she is able to give or what seems appropriate in different situations, and if one gives more than the other they do not worry about this or feel that the giver of less is in debt to the one who has given more. They know that if the situation had been reversed, the same excess would have been given by the other. Thus just as the equality of love is not equality of intellectual and other abilities or rank, so neither is it equality of amounts given.

Finally, persons who love one another can objectivise their ecstatic union by together producing a new being. A man and a woman who love each other may, working together, paint the rooms of a house, furnish them, put their things in them and cause the house, which is one thing which they have to some extent made, to be the tangible

expression of their shared memories, intentions and love and a reflection of the two of them in so far as they are united. More significantly, they may produce a child, a new being who is one person in whom they can see themselves and each other. When I come to deal separately with sexual love and friendship I shall have more to say about the “work of love” in which an ecstatic union is externalised. Let it suffice for the moment to say with Teilhard de Chardin that

in virtue of the same principle that compelled “simple” personal elements [individual persons] to complete themselves in the pair, the pair in its turn must pursue the achievement that its growth requires beyond itself... Without coming out of itself, the pair will find its equilibrium only in a third being ahead of it.  

Ecstatic love sometimes ends

Relationships exist which are understood to be of limited duration. For instance, people campaigning together for a cause or acting in a play often become comrades knowing that when the job has been done they will go their separate ways and not keep in touch; people in the same street sometimes become good neighbours, ready to lend each other garden tools and to warn of danger but understanding that if people move away they are not expected to write back to the street; and it seems that people have sexual relationships which they expect to last for, say, a year or two, then end. Also, teenage romances rarely last long and this seems to be perfectly natural. Finally, when people are on the way to becoming close friends or to getting married they sometimes draw back from final commitment and separate, and it was understood that they were free to do this. None of these is an example of full ecstatic love.

Sometimes ecstatic love comes to an end because the persons change. I shall deal with this later, when I talk separately about sexual love and friendship.

181 Teilhard de Chardin, Human Energy, pp. 75-76.
Some loves are ended by moral evil: people hurt their friends deeply and subsequently, preferring their pride to the friendship, refuse to apologise; and husbands and wives leave their spouses, who have done nothing to deserve this, and go off with other partners. In some cases superficial observers make mistakes about who does the splitting. If, for example, a woman learns that her husband is unfaithful and tells him that she knows, if he responds by saying that he has not the slightest intention of changing his ways and if she replies, “In that case, I’ll have to leave you,” and does so, it may appear to some of their acquaintances that _she_ ended the marriage. This is especially likely to happen if the acquaintances do not know about the husband’s affair. Now suppose that this woman’s brother and her husband have been friends and that when they next meet the husband talks to the brother as if nothing has happened which might affect their relationship. If the brother turns away to show that as far as he is concerned the two men are no longer friends, many will think that _he_ has ended the friendship. Finally, suppose that two young men have been friends as law students and that after graduation one goes into business and the other into law. Suppose that within a few years the businessman becomes rich and the lawyer is pleased to see his friend doing well, until one day he overhears a conversation which reveals to him that most of the money has been and is coming from, let us say, dealing in heroin. The lawyer is shocked and asks himself, “Should I report this?” and “Can I continue this friendship?” In the end he decides that he cannot in all honesty keep the friendship going and that he must tell the police what he has learned. To many people it will seem that he, the lawyer, has ended the relationship. In these three cases the wife, her brother and the lawyer may be accused of being judgemental, vindictive, unforgiving and unchristian. They may be told that they have failed as a spouse or as friends because love “bears all things,” which they have refused to do. The truth of the matter, however, is that by being unfaithful and by intending to go on being unfaithful the husband has broken the relationship between himself and his wife; all she does is see that it no longer exists and that there is no prospect of restoring it, see that for some time by living together they have been “living a lie,” and cause the outward circumstances of her life to tell the truth. It is, therefore, unfair to accuse her of ending the marriage, even though it is she who
leaves and even if in due course it is she who obtains a divorce. Similarly, the husband should know that his wife’s brother cannot be expected to remain his friend after what he has done to her. He, therefore, not the brother, breaks the friendship. What the brother does when they meet is refuse to pretend that they are still friends when they are not. Finally, and perhaps less obviously, when in the third example the lawyer learns what his friend has been and is doing, he judges that the other has far exceeded what he can be asked to accept or even tolerate and thus feels that the other has departed from him and gone to where they can be friends, in the full sense of the word, no more. When he is asked at the police station, “Is this man a friend of yours?,” he answers, sadly, “He used to be.”

In some cases, when one person breaks away from the other in an immoral way, the person who makes the break is not hostile towards his or her ex-partner. For instance, a man may leave his wife and say, in a Heraclitean way, “Nothing in life is permanent; our marriage was good while it lasted but it had run its course, like everything else it came to an end; I bear no ill-will towards my ex-wife, I have simply moved on.” At other times love turns into enmity. In the examples above, for instance, the husband may tell himself and other people that it was all his wife’s fault, that for years she selfishly kept him down at her own base level and blocked his search for happiness, and that she was in truth his worst enemy though he was then too good-hearted to see this; and he may foster in his heart a resentment which grows to fierce hostility and a desire to make her pay for spoiling the best years of his life. In the third example the businessman may complain bitterly of the lawyer who, he may say, by reporting him was a traitor to their friendship.

The hurt person may be angry, at least for a while. The deserted wife, for instance, may feel a rage that lasts all day if in the morning paper she sees a smiling photograph of her self-satisfied ex-husband with news of some appointment or award which has just been given to him. If we ask what the hurt person should feel and do, I for one would not say that anger is wrong. It should not, however, turn into vindictive hate: the woman should not tell her friends that if her ex-husband were to return to her on his knees and beg for forgiveness she would kick him in the teeth, and that if she were to learn that he has cancer she would celebrate with champagne.
In these situations, reconciliation and the mending of the broken love-relationship is possible. It requires, I believe, repentance on the part of the wrongdoer and forgiveness on the part of the one who has been hurt.\textsuperscript{182} These can be easy, but they can also be extremely difficult. I believe that the hurt person should be willing to forgive the other, if he or she repents and asks for forgiveness and reconciliation.

If there is no sign of repentance, what then? I maintain, but will not discuss here, that without repentance there can be no forgiveness, not because it would be too difficult but because it would not make sense: therefore in these circumstances there can be no forgiveness and hence there is no reconciliation. In \textit{Forgiving and Not Forgiving} Jeanne Safer says that “not forgiving without vindictiveness can be morally and emotionally right”\textsuperscript{183} and I agree.

It seems to me that what the person should do is this: make a personal life for himself or herself in which the offender has no part. If a woman was abandoned by her husband some years ago, and if it is now clear that he is extremely unlikely to seek a reconciliation, she may have to deal with him about money or other matters, but she should set about making a \textit{personal} life from which he is absent. Jeanne Safer says of a man who hurt her: “I can now encounter with equanimity a man I used to dread running into since he has not been part of my life for twenty-five years.”\textsuperscript{184} She says that a woman says of the brother who mistreated her: “I’ve taken a strong position that he’s out of my life.”\textsuperscript{185} (The last case involves solidarity-love, but the principle is the same.)

\textbf{Love is eternal: ecstatic love is meant to last}

Love, then, can end. But, as I said earlier, it is not meant to, and it often does last until death. It is simply untrue that everything changes, all is in a state of flux, nothing lasts. Is love meant to last even longer?

\textsuperscript{182} I deal with this at some length in Cowburn, \textit{Shadows and the Dark}, the last two chapters.

\textsuperscript{183} Safer, \textit{Forgiving and Not Forgiving}, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{184} Ibid., p. 44.

\textsuperscript{185} Ibid., p. 147.
Troisfontaines says: “True immortality means something more than the survival of the isolated individual: it means the perennity of the communion of love”; \(^{186}\) Unamuno says:

The thirst of eternity is what is called, among men, love, and whoever loves another desires to become eternal in this other. Whatever is not eternal is also not real.\(^{187}\)

In a play by Gabriel Marcel one of the characters says: “To love a being is to say: ‘Thou shalt not die’, ”\(^{188}\) which perhaps should read: “To love a being is to say: ‘We shall not die’”; Evdokimov affirms that “at a certain depth, to say ‘I love you’ means ‘We shall live forever’”;\(^ {189}\) and Boros says that immortality is “implied, co-posited and affirmed in all genuine love.”\(^ {190}\) If these authors are right, whenever people believe in an after-life they intend their love to last for all eternity. People who do not believe in an after-life cannot have this intention, but they may experience anguish at the thought of death and extinction precisely because they experience love as something which ought to be for ever. On the other hand, love may win its conflict with death in their minds and lead them to belief in an after-life. In Dostoyevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov* a woman who has lost her faith in God and a life after death is told:

Strive to love your neighbour actively and indefatigably. And the nearer you come to achieving this love, the more convinced you will become of the existence of God and the immortality of your soul. If you reach the point of complete selflessness [unselfishness] in your love of neighbours, you will most certainly regain your faith and no doubt can possibly enter your soul. This has been proved. This is certain.\(^ {191}\)

\(^{186}\) Troisfontaines, *I Do Not Die*, p. 110.

\(^{187}\) Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life*, chap. 3, p. 44.


\(^{190}\) Boros, *We Are Future*, p. 72.

\(^{191}\) Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, book 2, chap. 4, p. 61.
The benefits and significance of ecstatic love

Ecstatic love, in any form, benefits the lover in wonderful ways. In it each person is given another person, who is of ineffable value, and, looking at the other, can possessively say, “That is my spouse” or “That is my friend.” Also, each has the joy of being loved by another person and while to be understood by someone else is a great blessing, to be loved is much more. Moreover, if we feel that we matter to our parents, that is important, but we know that they did not choose us and that in a sense they must love us. If, however, I know that I matter very much to some other person who initially had no reason to be interested in me in particular, that is marvellous and a cure for the feeling of contingency or not-mattering. Simone de Beauvoir says: “From our first being thrown into the world we desire to escape from contingency, from the gratuitousness of mere presence; we need another person for our existence to become grounded and necessary”; “only another person’s liberty can necessitate my being”; and “I ask that liberties turn towards me to necessitate my acts.”

John Glenn Gray says the same thing in different words: “When we have a friend, we do not feel so much accidents of creation.” This can make the difference between life and death for people in prison or lost in a wilderness: if they feel that no one loves them they can easily judge that it does not matter whether they live or die and give up the struggle to survive, but when they know that people love them they feel that they matter and must survive. Often they do.

192 De Beauvoir, Pyrrhus et Cinéas, pp. 96, 119.
193 Gray, The Warriors, p. 93
194 In Wind, Sand and Stars Antoine de Saint-Exupéry tells of how he and another man were in an aeroplane which crashed in the North African desert, so that they were stranded there with virtually no food or water. At one point the other man said, “If I were alone in the world, I’d lie down right here. Damned if I wouldn’t.”
We have seen that ecstatic love presupposes self-love, but we have also seen, in the chapter on the ecstatic union, that the more persons love each other the more strongly they are themselves, and Ludwig Binswanger says succinctly: “The more I give myself to you, the more I possess myself; and the more you give yourself to me, the more you possess yourself.” This means that ecstatic love increases persons’ confidence in themselves and their love of life. It thus increases their capacity for action. Teilhard says that love gives persons “an exaltation that, a hundred times more than any solitary pride, can bring to life in them the most powerful and creative original forces.” This may even be a test of the genuineness of a love: Does it give energy?

Love and realism

Ecstatic love gives an awareness of other persons as real in themselves. When I put on a gramophone record, I have the subjective experience of hearing violins and I “place” them somewhere between the loudspeakers. I know, of course, that no violins are actually in the room, but this does not interfere with my enjoyment. If I were to become convinced that there were no loudspeakers there, and that the whole material universe existed only in my perception, this would not affect my enjoyment of the music, either. More generally, for experiences in which we merely use other beings, we do not need to believe that they exist in themselves. Moreover, if, for example, I study the colour of insects’ wings and one day learn (if I did not already know it) that colours exist only in my perceptions, I go on classifying them as before; and if I were to become convinced that the insects themselves existed only in my perceptions and in my mind, I would go on studying them exactly as before. That is, if I approach beings as a detached observer,

He meant: I’d stop trying to stay alive. (Wind, Sand and Stars, p. 130; Terre des hommes, VII, 6, Oeuvres, p. 232.)

195 Above, pp. 138-141.
196 Binswanger, Grundformen und Erkenntnis menschlichen Daseins, p. 133; see the whole section, pp. 121-138.
whether or not they exist in themselves does not matter to me and the history of philosophy shows that whenever men have said that knowing is the one essential human activity, they have at least tended to deny that the beings we know exist in themselves. When, however, I love other persons, I often inconvenience myself to fit in with their wishes and I am ready to make sacrifices for them. I certainly would not do that unless I believed that they exist in themselves. I might even be prepared to die for someone I love, but I would never give my life for the sake of a purely “phenomenal” being who or which was not really there. That is, if I love persons it is vitally important to me, it is essential, that they be real in themselves. This is because love goes not to a subjective experience, nor to natures or essences or qualities, but to actually existing persons who are not created in our imaginations but found where they exist in themselves.

With awareness of the reality of other persons comes a heightened awareness of the reality of the whole world. Ferdinand Ebner says that for the unloving person the world is unreal—he says that “the more the I shuts itself away from the Thou, the more it reduces the world to an unreal projection”—but for the person who loves someone things are intensely real. Aldous Huxley gives this description of the state of mind of a man in love:

I remember how he looked at landscapes; and the colours were incomparably brighter, the patterns that things made in space unbelievably beautiful. I remember how he glanced around him in the streets, and St Louis, believe it or not, was the most splendid city ever built. People, houses, trees, T-model Fords, dogs at lamp-posts—everything was more significant. Significant, you may ask, of what? And the answer is: themselves. These were realities, not symbols. Goethe was absolutely wrong. Alles vergängliche is NOT a Gleichnis. At every instant every transience is eternally that transience. What it signifies is its own being…. Why do you love the woman you’re in love with? Because she is … the girl who she

198 “For a spectator-existence,” says Binswanger, “the phenomenological reduction [supposing that beings may not exist in themselves] can be accomplished spontaneously” (Grundformen, p. 648).
199 See above p. 92, where I said that meeting involves finding.
200 Ebner, Das Wort und die geistigen Realitäten, 12th fragment, p. 155.
is. Some of the isness spills over and impregnates the entire universe. Objects and events cease to be mere representatives of classes and become their own uniqueness; cease to be illustrations of verbal abstractions and become fully concrete.\textsuperscript{201}

Finally, ecstatic love gives great happiness. As Bonaventure said, “nothing in creation is as delightful as mutual love, and without love there is no delight.”\textsuperscript{202} Not only do people who love each other enjoy each other: loving each other, they enjoy everything that is good, whether it be food, drink, music, scenery or sport, or at least they enjoy it more. They enjoy life.

That the benefits of love are not its motive

If someone who had heard about the benefits of love were to “love” someone in order to obtain them, this would not be love and he would not obtain them; but love another person for his or her sake and the benefits will flow to you. Cicero saw this and said: “To love is nothing but to love him whom you love, looking for nothing you need and could use; but you will receive benefits from friendship without looking for them”;\textsuperscript{203} Etienne Gilson said that according to the medievals love “can exist only if it seeks no reward, but once it exists it is rewarded”;\textsuperscript{204} and Luijpen says that “it is impossible for man to love his fellow-men in such a way that his love will not de facto be for the benefit of the lover himself,” but, he says, a person finds fulfilment in love “on condition that this fulfilment be not the motive of his love.”\textsuperscript{205}

\textsuperscript{201} Huxley, \textit{The Genius and the Goddess}, pp. 45-46. In Goethe’s \textit{Faust} is the line:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Alles Vergängliche} Everything transient
\textit{Ist nur ein Gleichnis.} is only a likeness.
\end{quote}

(This comes near the end of Mahler’s 8th symphony.)

\textsuperscript{202} Bonaventure, \textit{Sent.} 1, dist. 10, a. 1, q. 2.

\textsuperscript{203} Cicero, \textit{De amicitia}, 27,100.

\textsuperscript{204} Gilson, \textit{The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy}, pp. 280-281.

\textsuperscript{205} Luijpen, \textit{Existential Phenomenology}, p. 222.
This does not mean that when persons love others they have absolutely no thought of the benefits that come from loving and being loved, in no way intend to receive them and do not appreciate or enjoy them when they come. On the contrary, they may be well aware of the benefits beforehand, they may certainly enjoy them when they come and, as I explained earlier, this does not mean that their love is tainted or not altruistic.206

Loneliness

A traveller arrives after nightfall in a strange town, where he speaks the language badly. As he comes out of the railway station he sees fireworks in the sky and asks somebody what is being celebrated. The brusque answer is unintelligible, but enough to let him know that whatever it is, it is purely local and no concern of his. He walks on into the town and as groups of people pass him, talking, he senses that it is a vast network of relationships in which every citizen is linked to everyone in it and tonight, all together, they are celebrating something. And he is entirely outside the system. He is not a knot in the net, nor even attached to it. In the organism that is the town he is a foreign body. He does not belong. He has no place there. If he could make personal contact with even only one of the citizens, he would obtain a connection with the town as a whole—but he knows nobody at all. He walks about emptily because he has nothing to do, and feels lonely. For some people, this town is the world, and it is horrible.

The problem of loneliness runs through modern literature. It is in Eliot, for example, from the “lonely men in shirtsleeves, leaning out of windows”207 to the woman who has been having an affair with a married man and who says:

> What has happened has made me aware
> That I’ve always been alone. That one always is alone.208

206 See above, p. 36.
The man says:

*What is hell? Hell is oneself,
Hell is alone, the other figures in it
Merely projections. There is nothing to escape from
And nothing to escape to. One is always alone.*

Loneliness is in André Malraux, for instance in Chen the terrorist in *Man’s Estate*, who “could never have believed that it was possible to feel so lonely.” Indeed, Emmanuel Mounier said: “The abrupt, devouring experience of loneliness dominates all Malraux’s characters without exception.” In many thrillers, the characters are lonely men and women. Finally, all the books about alienation, about the failure to communicate and about “the lonely crowd” testify to the prevalence of the ache of loneliness in our world and if there are philosophers who can write even about “myself and others” without mentioning it, that only shows how out of touch they are with life.

The agony of loneliness includes the pain of estrangement from oneself, as well as that of separation from others. It also involves an estrangement from things, a sense of not-belonging in the world, and an all-pervading anxiety. A person’s view of the world is darkened, life is a season in hell, the world is a city of dreadful night, and ennui or nausea fills the soul.

As Berdyaev says, the “objective world” of knowledge, work and things “can never be the means of liberating man from the prison of his solitude,” and neither can a social life where people converse for a few minutes before moving on and where if you say you know someone all you mean is that he is a stranger with whom you have shaken hands. Of this kind of social life Nikolai Berdyaev said that “the most extreme and distressing form of solitude [loneliness] is that experienced in society.”

Neither can transitory sexual encounters alleviate loneliness, for, as Camus says through Clamence in *The Fall*, debauchery “is liberating

---

209 Ibid., act 1, scene 3, p. 99.
210 Malraux, *Man’s Estate*, p. 54.
212 Berdyaev, *Solitude and Society*, p. 94.
because it creates no obligations. In it you possess only yourself.” 213 Camus, *The Fall*, p. 76. 
Companionship and other forms of solidarity-love, and the company of people who are not one’s friends but who are reasonable and pleasant, can help. But in the end, as Berdyaev says, “love and friendship are man’s only hope of triumphing over solitude [loneliness].” 214 This is why Aristotle said: “No one would choose to live without friends, though possessing all other good things,” 215 and Cicero said that if some god were to offer to put a man where there was an abundance of all that nature can provide, but where he would be alone, “Who would be so made of iron that the solitude would not entirely spoil his enjoyment?” 216 This is not to say that we all want to spend every moment of our lives in the company of people who love us. A mature person needs to be alone at times, for extended periods, and can mingle with strangers without suffering pangs of loneliness: ultimate loneliness comes from not having a relationship of ecstatic love with anyone anywhere, and less loneliness is felt during long separations from all friends.

The pain of loneliness and the force of that pain show how deep is the need which every person has for other persons. In the fourteenth century Richard Rolle said that “a reasonable soul cannot be without love while it is in this life,” for, he said, “to love and be loved is the secret business of all human life.” 217 In 1847 Kierkegaard said that the first statement ever made about man was made by his creator and was: “It is not good that man should be alone” (Gen 2:18), and he talked about how deeply rooted the human need for love is. 218 In this century Buber, Ebner and some others, whom I quoted earlier, have stressed (indeed overstressed) the necessity of love of other persons. 219 The personalist movement which began around 1930 with Mounier maintained that the person is profoundly communitarian or that for

213 Camus, *The Fall*, p. 76.
216 Cicero, *De amicitia*, 23, 87.
219 These authors said that a human being needs love in order to be a person (“Through the Thou a man becomes I,” said Buber in *I and Thou*, p. 28). I maintain that a human being needs to be a person in order to love.
truly personal existence the company of other persons is absolutely necessary. In 1942 Ludwig Binswanger said that love is “a structural element of the very being of human life.” Life with love, then, is the normal and only fully human life, and loneliness or what Ebner called “the Thoulessness of the I” is a painful deviation from the norm.

I said earlier that no other person can claim ecstatic love from me as something to which he has a right so that I am not morally obliged to have ecstatic love for any particular other person. I must now add that to choose to be a Thouless I with no ecstatic love for anyone would be spiritual suicide and therefore immoral. If, for the sake of argument, someone found himself condemned to spend the rest of his life in a town where he had no affinity with anyone at all, though everyone was pleasant to him, he might reluctantly conclude that he was going to be lonely there. This would not be his fault. If, however, another person came to live in the town and if when they met he quickly found that they were natural soul-mates, it would normally be wrong for him to choose not to let a friendship develop—not because the other had a right to his love but because for himself to choose loneliness would be wrong.

The significance of ecstatic love

I talked earlier of how we are approaching a point at which all the people in the world will know of the existence of everyone else and there will be an almost universal solidarity love. This is important, but the catch is that solidarity-love tends to become weaker as one moves away from the immediate family to the extended family and then on to the country, or from the town to the state or province and then to the whole country, and by the time one reaches the whole

---

220 Mounier, Revolution personnaliste et communautaire (1935), in Oeuvres, I, p. 194; and Qu’est-ce que le personnalisme? (1947), in Oeuvres, III, p. 223. There have been other personalisms, most notably what is sometimes called Boston Personalism.

221 Binswanger, Grundformen, p. 83.

222 See above, p. 104.
human race it has usually become thin. This is where ecstatic love comes in. Taking a man from one family and a woman from another, it joins them in a union which, ideally and often in practice, takes precedence over the union which either of them has with his or her family. It takes men and women from different milieux and different countries and unites them in friendship or marriage. It also unites their extended families and circles of friends. It thus has its own significant role in the unification of the human race, and now that it is possible for many people to travel to other countries there are more and more mixed-nation marriages and friendships. Moreover, ecstatic love unites persons without making them resemble one another, so that when a French person and an English person get married or become friends, they expect each other to go on being French and English respectively. Thus ecstatic love is uniting people of different countries without flattening them or leading to cultural homogenisation.
Part 4

The Two Kinds of Ecstatic Love: Sexual Love and Friendship
It is maintained by some authors, including Andrew Greeley, that all love is in essence sexual and hence that the relationships between a married couple, a pair of lovers and two or more friends are all sexual. In *The Friendship Game* Greeley says:

> It is frequently assumed that love is what man feels for his mate or for the person who is substituting for his mate and that friendship is an emotion that he feels for someone with whom he is not sleeping. But such an assumption is based on pre-Freudian notions of sexuality, since it supposes that love is sexual and friendship is not. As I have argued elsewhere, all human friendship has profoundly sexual overtones, and marriage just happens to be that sexual relationship that provides a context for sexual intercourse.\(^{223}\)

In *Sexual Intimacy* he says that one of his basic assumptions is that “all human relationships are sexual; the more intimate they are, the more sexual they become.”\(^{224}\) I flatly disagree with that and maintain that, whether or not some friendships have sexual “overtones,” friendships are not *in essence* sexual, whereas other relationships, which I am calling relationships of sexual love, are sexual in their very essence. If this is pre-Freudian, so be it.

Let us reflect on the differences which anyone can observe between sexual love and friendship.

---

\(^{223}\) Greeley, *The Friendship Game*, p. 33. I am curious to know what exactly he means by “the person who is substituting for his mate.”  
\(^{224}\) Greeley, *Sexual Intimacy*, p. 16.
1 The role of physical appearance

For a woman to attract sexual love, it helps greatly to have beauty, youth and health. A visible deformity (I will not give an example) is likely to be an obstacle to this kind of love. For a man, physical health and fitness count for a great deal, but (it is sometimes said) good looks and youth count less and strength of character counts more, when it is apparent to anyone who sees him. For friendship, physical appearance hardly counts at all, and a slightly deformed or disfigured woman with whom no one has fallen in love may have no trouble at all making friends with both women and men, while a man who is not sexually attractive can have friends.

2 The fascination with physical appearance

When a man is in love with a woman, he cannot take his eyes off her, he watches her movements, he devours her with his eyes and he is enthralled by her beauty and grace. When she is not present, he often looks at her photograph. Friends do not behave in that way. I do not wish to make myself ridiculous by saying that when a man has a friendship with a beautiful woman he is completely unaware of her physical appearance or indifferent to it, or that he never looks at her; I do, however, maintain that he is not fascinated by her appearance as he would be if he were in love with her.

3 The role of instinct

Once sexual reproduction appeared in the course of evolution, beings with strong sexual instincts had, on the average, more offspring than others and they passed the strong instinct on to them, with the result that, generally speaking, human beings have strong sexual tendencies during their reproductive years, which are activated by persons of the
opposite sex who are likely to be good propagators of the species. It is said (but also denied) that what makes a woman sexually attractive is an appearance which indicates that she is likely to be capable of having children, while what makes a man sexually attractive is an appearance which indicates that he is likely to be capable not only of having children but of protecting and providing for his woman and children; which is why the appearance of youth is more significant in a woman than in a man. In both sexes, a visible deformity is off-putting, for genetic reasons. When people experience sexual attraction, Mother Nature is pursuing her biological aims.

Like other instincts, the sexual instinct is not rational and hence it is not affected by what a person knows but cannot see. If, for instance, a man knows that an attractive woman cannot have children, or if a strong-looking man happens to be sterile and a woman knows that, this is unlikely to affect the working of the sexual instinct. Similarly, if a person was disfigured in an accident, so that everyone knows that the defect is not hereditary, this will not stop the disfigurement from causing others to find him or her sexually unattractive. It is looks that count.

I talked earlier of how ideally human beings make rational judgements, sometimes positive and sometimes negative, about what they instinctively feel inclined or almost driven to do. This is extremely clear in this area: sometimes a person feels an urge, which comes from his or her animal nature and is therefore instinctive, to do something which he or she judges to be not merely good but marvellous, and proceeds to do it; at other times people feel sexual urges that come from the same source, judge them to be (let us say) inappropriate, and decide not to act on them. The more developed the person, the greater is the control of judgement over instinct - control which may be exercised by allowing free rein to the instinct - and the more civilised the community the more control is expected.225

Friendship is not instinctive and non-rational in this way.

---

225 See above, pp. 51-52.
4 Sexual love is felt in the senses

Sexual love includes physical experience. On falling in love a man may feel as though he has been punched in the ribs and then so light that all streets seem to be downhill. He may walk round in a kind of trance, feeling in his entire body a delightful sense of well-being. And the expressions of sexual love in poems and songs are full of hearts beating strongly, spirits lifted high, feelings of flying and—but need I go on? Young people used to be told not to mistake physical attraction for love and not to enter into a marriage that was based only on physical attraction, and this was and is sound advice, but without any, indeed without quite strong, physical attraction and feelings there cannot be sexual love. I shall say later that some of these feelings do not last for ever, but, as Gaylin says, they continue to exist in the memory, and other feelings come into play and form part of the essence of the relationship.

Friends are pleased to see one another and if one has reason for delight or anguish the other is delighted or anguished, too, but at ordinary times their relationship is not sensual in this way, and nothing is missing. Sometimes, it is true, a measure of sensual attraction exists between friends, for whom it is a potentially disturbing force of which, if they wish to remain friends, they must be wary; at other times, some sensual attraction exists which the friends, judging that there is no danger of their love for one another changing from friendship to sexual love, accept, so that they quite enjoy responding to each other’s good looks or voices and exchanging quick affectionate gestures, believing these to be grace-notes of their relationship, not phrases of its melody.

5 Physical nearness

Sexual lovers desire, from the beginning, to be in each other’s physical presence. They see each other every day, if possible. If they cannot be together, they may enjoy physical nearness as the next best thing—in
My Fair Lady a young man sings of how he feels sixteen stories high just by being not even in the same room as the girl he loves but only in the street where she lives. If they are separated by a long distance for a considerable time, they suffer greatly and, if possible, try to overcome the distance by making phone calls in which they talk to have the auditory sensation of nearness, not to convey information.

If friends do see one another frequently, they enjoy this. If, however, they do not in the ordinary course of events see one another often, they are content to see each other now and then. If they are separated by distance they exchange the occasional letter or phone call and find that sufficient. Again, their relationship is less physical than is sexual love.

6 Physical contact

People who are in love desire and delight in physical contact, even of a kind that is not overtly sexual, and when they have it they enjoy it. They sit close together, they hold hands, they link arms. If a man is in love with a woman and she strokes his forearm as he talks to her, he may rise to a pinnacle of sensual delight. At times they hug one another and kiss. It does not stop there, of course.

Friends may shake hands when they meet after a long separation, and a man and woman or two women who are friends may hug and kiss when they meet, but without the same intensity and delight.

7 Sexual intercourse

Sexual love has an inner dynamic, so that when a young man and a young woman have first fallen in love they may not want to have sexual intercourse or indeed to do anything overtly sexual, but if they consent to their feelings and spend a lot of time together they eventually find themselves at least wanting to cross a threshold and do sexual things, and sooner or later they want to make love. Sometimes a man and a
woman who are not free to get married, and who both believe that sexual intercourse outside marriage is immoral, fall in love with one another and, finding that they do not consciously desire sex, judge that their love is innocent and permissible; they spend a lot of time together, and delight in talking, listening to music together, holding hands, walking in the park, and so on and so forth; and they imagine that they will be able to go on doing these things, enjoying them, for years and years; but their love changes according to its own inner dynamic and after a while they feel not blissful in each other's company but tense, not content just to be together but strangely discontented; they may not talk about it, but they both feel a strong desire to cross the threshold into sexual behaviour and the conflict between their desires and their moral beliefs is stressful in the extreme. Either they abandon morality and make love, or they separate.

Friendships, too, can grow with time, as the friends do things together, tell each other what is happening in their lives and help each other when help is needed. But they do not as a rule begin at some stage to experience sexual desire for one another. The reason why they do not have sexual intercourse, therefore, is not that “marriage just happens to be that sexual relationship that provides a context for sexual intercourse” and they are not married; it is that a friendship does not evolve according to an inner dynamic towards sexual intercourse. As a friendship develops, the friends move towards becoming old friends, not lovers or spouses.

8 Exclusiveness

One of the best-known differences between sexual love and friendship is that the former is exclusive and the latter is not. If two persons are friends, neither minds if the other has other friends, or falls in love with someone else or is married. On the contrary, you expect many of your friends to be married, you expect them to have other friends, you probably get on well with their spouses and other friends, and if a friend of yours makes a new friend, or if he or she falls in love and is going to get married, you are pleased and you are happy to meet the
new friend or the prospective spouse. Sexual love, on the other hand, excludes other relationships of the same kind. This means that if, for instance, a woman enjoys the company of several men and feels affectionate towards them all in much the same way, she does not have sexual love for any of them and if her parents were to advise her to choose the one she liked most and marry him, that would be bad advice.

A material thing can be wholly owned by only one person at a time, but it is characteristic of spiritual realities that they can be possessed wholly by many persons at once—an idea, for example, can be grasped by many persons at once, and many people can have the same knowledge, which for each of them is his or hers. This means, for instance, that if a book contains valuable information, only one person can own a particular copy of it but many people can read it and obtain possession of the information. This explains why sexual love, which involves a physical as well as a spiritual possession of one person by another, is exclusive, whereas friendship, which is purely spiritual, is not.

**Conclusion**

My contention, then, is that ecstatic love exists in two species, sexual love and friendship. The difference between these is not that friendship is purely spiritual whereas sexual love is purely sensual, because something purely sensual would not be love. It is that friendship is in essence spiritual but sexual love is in essence both spiritual and sensual. Gaylin says:

> It is a volatile mixture of two potent forces which must coexist in one relationship: the caring and tender aspects on the one hand, and erotic desire on the other. Romantic love, in fusing these two passions, creates something quite different from the elements that compose it.  

---

226 See the chart on p. 38, above.
Instead of “caring and tender aspects” I would speak of intellectual communion, the sharing of ideals, the mutual appreciation of qualities of character, and other spiritual realities; also, there is more than desire in the sensual “force”: but Gaylin’s idea that sexual love is a compound of two elements is, I am sure, right.

If, then, a couple have strong sexual desires for each other but at the spiritual level do not understand, appreciate or respect each other, or if they are not committed to each other, they do not have love; and if they have a good spiritual relationship but no sexual feelings, they may be friends but what they have for one another is not sexual love. In some sexual couples the sensuous element is extremely strong and communication at the spiritual level is not deep; in other couples the sensuous element is not strong and they are more like friends than lovers ought to be; ideally, both elements are strong and then the love engages the whole human being and is tremendously absorbing. For friendship, on the other hand, physical attraction can be missing entirely; if a sensual element is present, it is definitely not of the essence of the relationship.
The classic beginning of a relationship of sexual love is for two single people to meet suddenly, to find each other both physically attractive and, as persons, delightful, to experience strong feelings which either render them speechless or make them surprisingly fluent, to make a leap of faith to the certainty that this is the man or woman for me, or in a word to fall in love. They arrange to see each other again soon and in subsequent conversations they learn that their first impressions were correct—they really are right for each other. They tell each other about themselves and each listens. They go to various places so that each can see how the other behaves in different situations; they play games so that each can see the other’s nature revealed under stress during the game and in victory or defeat at the end; and they go to films or plays, which they discuss afterwards and so reveal their understanding of life. They probably talk a lot on the telephone; if he is alone in his house and the phone rings his first thought is that it is she, he is slightly disappointed if it is not (their friends grow accustomed to hearing “Oh, it’s you,” when they introduce themselves on the phone) and when they ring each other up they dispense with identification and start right in talking. They may write to each other. They also express their affection physically in a progressive way. When both are quite sure and ready to take the step, they promise eternal fidelity.

That is love at first sight, of which Marlowe asked:

Who ever lov’d, that lov’d not at first sight?

Marlowe, *Hero and Leander*, the line is quoted by Phoebe in Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, act 3, scene 5.
The answer to that question is, “A lot of people,” because people sometimes meet, quite like each other, happen to see each other again, then again, find each other more and more interesting, begin to tell their friends, “When you get to know him he’s really great,” perhaps discover that a face which had seemed plain is actually beautiful and some months after their first meeting discover that they are in love. The man, for instance, may one day say to himself, “I think of her about once every three minutes. When something happens to me, my first thought is of how I shall tell her about it. If I am away from her, I feel lonely; when I am with her, I feel at peace. Normally I am anxious about money, though I do not need to be, but when I take her out I never give it a thought. From all this I deduce that I am in love. I wonder if she is. I will ask her.” Thomas Aquinas, by the way, did not believe in love at first sight. “The passion of love,” he said much too dogmatically, “does not arise suddenly, but by careful inspection of the loved thing.”

At other times, one person falls in love and the other does not; the former then sets out to win the other’s love.

Analysis of these early stages

Meeting involves finding and people find each other when one hears the other laughing across a crowded room, when one goes for a walk along a beach and finds the other there, looking for shells and not expecting the course of his or her life to be changed in the next five minutes, and in thousands of other ways. Sometimes a man and a woman know each other for a long time, as colleagues who talk about the job or as neighbours who talk about the weather, and then, one day, he finds her crying and asks what is wrong, she tells him, he feels weak, they go somewhere to talk and they find each other’s private inner selves; or he is troubled, she says, “You’re upset about something, aren’t you?” and he suddenly begins to confide in her and it is

229 “Passio autem amoris hoc habet quod non subito exoritur, sed per aliquam assiduam inspectionem rei amatae.” Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2-2 27 2 c.

230 See above, p. 92.
almost as if they had never seen each other before. However it happens, there is a finding of someone who has been in existence for years.

This is partly explicable in terms of biology and instinct. It seems that because the mating of close relatives is more likely than other matings to produce defective offspring, when boys and girls grow up together from infancy in the same family or quasi-family and reach sexual maturity, they are unresponsive to each other’s sexual attraction. This is the result of what is called negative imprinting and it happens not only to blood brothers and sisters but also to boys and girls adopted by the same couple. Moreover, in the early seventies Joseph Shepher studied the records of all known kibbutzim marriages in Israel and found that of 2,769 marriages only 13 had been between men and women who had been reared together and none of these had been together before the age of six.231 Sometimes in a small town all the boys and girls know one another as children, grow up together and when they reach maturity some of them, if I may put it this way, fail to fall in love and get married; then an unknown young man or woman comes to live in the town and almost immediately becomes engaged to one of them; or one of the young men from the town goes to a city and almost at once falls in love with a girl whom he meets there and marries her, whereupon his parents ask him: “Is there not a woman among the daughters of your kinsmen, or among all our people, that you must go and take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?” (Judg 14:3), or words to that effect, but he did not marry a foreign girl because there were no suitable girls at home—it was because the girls at home were too familiar to him. As Guitton says, “It is to the being whom we meet that we give ourselves, not to the one who was there.”232

In the meeting and during the getting-to-know-each-other phase which follows it, each person is intensely aware of the other as other, which in this case includes different. “The mystery of sex,” says

Guitton, “is that of otherness in its most singular manifestation,” and in *Women in Love* D. H. Lawrence says of Birkin and Ursula that each was to the other “a palpable revelation of living otherness” and that “she was to him, what he was to her, the immemorial magnificence of mystic, palpable, real otherness.”

Also, each is to the other not just “a man” or “a woman” and as such different; each is a particular other man or woman, on whom attention and affection are fixed in a non-transferable way. Increasingly during this time a person who has perhaps thought mostly about himself or herself when not busy, thinks constantly about a particular other person and is as it were with the other all the time. This is ecstasy, which I described earlier.

As they come to know each other better, their delight in each other grows. More and more fully they accept each other. This involves some acceptance of limitations. The woman, for instance, takes the man to an orchestral concert which he, who has never actually listened to music without words for more than about a minute at a time, finds excruciatingly boring and by his fidgeting with the programme causes the person next to him, who happens to be me, to ponder the possibility of suing him for half the cost of the ticket; afterwards, the woman tells him that she will not inflict such pain on him again and she accepts the fact that musical he is not. But mostly they accept each other as wonderful and if anyone is reading this chapter without having read the earlier ones I would request him or her to read my explanation of what I mean by acceptance, earlier in this book.

**Commitment**

Stan van Hooft has maintained that when two people move from acquaintanceship to affection and then to love, they come at some stage to have between them “the bond of love.” At this stage, he says, they are committed to each other, though neither may have “explicitly

---

235 Above, chap. 1.
formulated that commitment" in a conscious decision. Then they consciously decide to declare their love and each says to the other, “I love you,” which is “a disclosure of commitment” or “an expression of a hidden bond of love.” He goes on:

Lovers have to overcome fears and inhibitions when they declare their love to each other. The comfort and inertia of their lives will be destroyed by this declaration. The risks of hurt and disappointment will be accepted. Most crucially, another person will be accepted into one’s life as important so that one’s exclusive focus upon oneself and one’s own interests is relinquished. One will have to entrust oneself to the other.

There is here an explicit decision and it is “the making of a commitment.” “One cannot,” he says, “love without having a commitment and tending to make a commitment.”

Van Hooft is here opposing the view of those who, when they hear it said that love is a commitment, think of a commitment as a coldly rational act (for Robert Solomon, he says, “commitment excludes emotion”) and who, emphasizing the emotional element in love, deny that love involves commitment. The bond of love, he says, is prior to explicit or conscious acts and it includes commitment, which is then not created but accepted in consciousness.

Chance, nature and free will

In almost everything connected with reproduction, nature leaves a great deal to chance: in fertilisation, for instance, it operates like someone who fires a machine gun at a target, spreading hundreds of bullets over an area in the expectation that one of them—not a particular one, just any of them—will hit it, rather than like someone who takes aim with a rifle and fires one round. Similarly, nature

---

237 Ibid., p. 456.
238 Ibid., p. 461.
239 Ibid., p. 459.
240 Ibid.
throws men and women into the world meaning them to mate with each other and have children, but not meaning any particular one to mate with any particular other, and so we find that nearly always it is by chance that particular men meet particular women.\textsuperscript{241}

When a man and a woman have met by chance, forces of nature come into play. First, as I said in the previous chapter, if they are sexually attractive persons they respond instinctively to each other’s appearance and physical aura.\textsuperscript{242} Second, just as some chemicals interact and others do not, a man can find women of a certain type attractive to him and others not, and the same holds for women, so that regarding a particular man and woman people talk of the chemistry being right or not. Third, psychological qualities can cause people to find each other attractive or not. For instance, ambition and determination can make a man sexually attractive to some women and not to others, a man who resembles a woman’s father may be more attractive to her than to others, and at times people seem to be drawn towards prospective partners who have qualities which they themselves lack. In all these ways, when two particular people are attracted to one another it is not a matter of chance, and neither is it voluntary on their part: it is determined by their genes and past experience. I should add that natural forces can inhibit sexual attraction. As I said earlier, if boys and girls grow up together in a family, or in a group which resembles a family, sexual attraction between them is inhibited. Also, as I said above, a visible deformity can render a person sexually unattractive. Finally, if a woman was badly hurt by her father she may involuntarily find unattractive any man who resembles him.

The instinctive reactions which I have just described are not, of themselves, love. If the couple who experience them talk to one another and come to know one another spiritually, and if they appreciate and accept one another, there can be love.

If we were to consider only natural forces we might tend to agree with the determinists and say that when two people meet, what happens from then on is predetermined. When, however, two people have crossed each other’s paths by chance and been involuntarily attracted, a moment of choice arrives, for they can resist whatever

\textsuperscript{241} Many Christians think that such meetings are providential, not chance. See below, p. 220.

\textsuperscript{242} See above, p. 140.
attraction they feel and separate, or they can choose to go with their feelings and arrange to meet again. If they arrange to meet again, there will be many choices as they decide what to tell one another and what to do together. If, early or late, they love one another, it will be by choice and a number of authors have stressed this. For instance, Ortega y Gasset says that if a normal man sees a beautiful woman his attention is at least momentarily drawn to her; this, he says, is involuntary, peripheral to his personal core and not love; in love, a man by a free choice becomes actively involved, with his whole being, in responding to the call addressed to him by another person. Vernon Grant says that “modern studies have stressed the selective features of attraction, finding the key to sexual love not in sublimation but in something perhaps so familiar that it is often overlooked: the phenomenon of choice.” Finally, Robert C. Solomon says that love’s “most essential ingredient—too often hidden in the language of ‘spontaneity’ and ‘chance’—is personal choice.” He says: “Love is a decision. A decision to love, and a decision about whom to love, and how, and when, and why. Romantic love is an emotion of choice.” These authors mean that in spite of the play of instincts, glands and all the other factors that are independent of the will, in spite also of the fact that much depends on circumstances over which persons have no control, persons retain their power over themselves and their loves are their own choice. They can walk away; in some cases they can choose to be an acquaintance or friend of the other, checking their sexual tendencies; or they can say, not necessarily aloud, “I consent to you, with a sexual love. Neither other people, circumstances nor forces in myself compel me to do this. I love you of my own free will and therefore it is really I who love you.” Stan van Hooft, whom I quoted above, seems to say that the bond of love often comes into existence without any explicit choice of the persons involved, but he clearly believes that the expression of love, when it comes, is a free action in which persons take the risk of entrusting themselves to each other, and this makes the relationship.

244 Grant, Falling in Love, p. 49.
246 Ibid., p. 212.
Sense and spirit

When in the previous chapter I set out the differences between sexual love and friendship, I said that sexual love is in essence both sensual and spiritual but I emphasised the sensual element because that is what differentiates sexual love from friendship. That the experience is also spiritual is apparent in the concentration on a particular person, in permanence, and very clearly in the lovers’ freedom of choice, which I have talked about in this chapter.

In the analysis which I set out above, instinct preceded choice. This is probably the most common order of events, but it is not the only one. Sometimes persons do not respond to each other sexually—it may be because of appearance, or it may be because of the roles that they are called on to play—and they establish a spiritual rapport of some kind; after a time, for instance when they meet in a different social context, they discover each other as sexually attractive persons and, if they so choose, go on to establish between them a relationship of sexual love.

The need for maturity

Sexual love, like all ecstatic love, needs maturity. Growing-up experiences like the adoration of a remote and celebrated beauty or star, fixation on a teacher of the opposite sex and teenage romances are important, perhaps even necessary. Through them people become aware of their sexual inclinations and learn to accept them joyfully and they get an inkling of what sexual love is, but they are unreal, fragile and not really love. Moreover, many people, when they are adults, seem to need to have a romance which fills their hearts for a time but turns out to have been part of their education, not the real thing. It does not last, the real thing comes along and this time there is no mistake because, thanks partly to the earlier romance, they are now mature.
19 The sexual relationship

I have perhaps been too lyrical on the subject of falling in love. When, forty years ago, I first wrote some of what I said about it in the previous chapter, I may have been reacting against people who, writing or talking about it, were dismissive and even contemptuous. I do not now think that they were right and I was wrong—far from it, or I would not have included those passages in this book—but I see the need now to stress that while it has its place at the beginning of a relationship of sexual love, its euphoria, its walking-on-air feeling, does not last a lifetime, and whereas falling in love can happen to people or engage them effortlessly, “mature love,” as Gaylin says, “does not just happen; it must be patiently constructed.”247 Not that falling in love is forgotten, or thrown into the part of our memories that is a rubbish bin for youthful follies which now seem to us to have happened to other people. As Gaylin also says, “love can carry within itself the memory of falling in love,”248 and for the rest of their lives each person can be for the other the same person as he or she was then, and each remembers being in love with a firm belief that “That was me then,” and treasures the memory of the experience.

If I reacted against people who in their concern to stress the permanence of love were dismissive of the experience of falling in love, Gaylin reacts against people who stress the passing experience and dismiss permanence as impossible or, at best, improbable. Every day one reads that someone has said that it is absurd to commit oneself for life to another person whom one happens now to love and Gaylin, who I suspect has read even more statements of that kind, and who has dealt with more broken marriages, than I have, says that it is unfortunately true that

in these days of overripened individualism, with our emphasis on
the here-and-now rather than the long-range, with our elevation of
pleasure over purpose, of fulfilment over duty, of right over
responsibility, nothing is likely to exist “till death do us part.”²⁴⁹

But, he says, this is not the supposition on which people who love one
another ought to work and he writes about the possible permanence
of love, emphasising the “least glamorous component of love, com-
mitment,”²⁵⁰ which, he says, “comes very hard these days.”²⁵¹ He says:

Commitment is an act of will and a statement of intent. It is a
promissory note to love. When we commit something to another,
we are of course entrusting it to them, and when it is love about
which we are talking, what we are giving in trust to the other person
is nothing less than ourselves.²⁵²

It is characteristic of physical things that they are constantly changing
and sexual love, which as we have seen has a physical component,
progresses through a series of phases which I shall not attempt to
describe here—Jack Dominian presents his account of them in
Marriage, Faith and Love. Suffice it to say that, in our societies, a
couple usually spend a great deal of time together without any
promises being made; then they agree or promise to marry each other,
on the understanding that either may call the marriage off; if this does
not happen, they get married and find that because of their commit-
ment their relationship is now different; they have children, and may
find that it has changed again; and so on: but, ideally, through all the
changes they remain the same persons and their love endures.

Among other things, this means that people who have a series of
love-relationships, each lasting for a few months or years, never get
beyond the early stages of love: at the point where they could be
moving into a more mature phase of a love they stop and start from
the beginning again with someone else. It seems rather like reading the
first chapters of a lot of different books, and no book right through.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 227. ²⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 223. ²⁵¹ Ibid., p. 226. ²⁵² Ibid. Gaylin deals with commitment on pp. 223-226, then goes on to discuss
marriage, which of course involves commitment.
The ecstatic union

In all ecstatic love the persons, by giving themselves to each other, become united in what I have called an ecstatic union. As sexual love is both spiritual and sensual, its ecstatic union is both spiritual and sensual, so that sexual lovers hold hands, hug each other, kiss and when they reach a certain stage they make love. In Plato’s Symposium Aristophanes explains love-making by saying that originally there were androgynous or male-and-female human beings, which split into two parts, one male and the other female; consequently, he said, neither a man nor a woman is a complete human being and sexual intercourse is the attempt of a man and a woman to put a human being together again. Some Christian authors adapted this theory, saying that the first human being was androgynous and was then divided into the male Adam and the female Eve, and that in marriage men and women endeavour to restore humanity’s original unity. This is linked with the idea that in sexual intercourse a man and a woman cease to be two persons and become one. In some passages of his novels, D. H. Lawrence talks of two lovers becoming one when one absorbs and consumes the other. In Sons and Lovers (1913) he says of Miriam and Paul:

She did not want to meet him, so that there were two of them, man and woman together. She wanted to draw all of him into her.

In The Rainbow (1915), when Ursula kisses Anton Skrebensky, “she took him in the kiss” and “she seemed to be destroying him.”

Hard and fierce she had fastened upon him, cold as the moon and burning as a fierce salt. Till gradually his warm, soft iron yielded, and she was there fierce, corrosive, seething with his destruction, seething like cruel, corrosive salt around the last substance of his being, destroying him, destroying him in the kiss. And her soul crystallised with triumph, and his soul was dissolved with agony and annihilation. So she held him there, the victim, consumed, annihilated. She had triumphed. He was not any more.

253 Plato, The Symposium, 191. 254 Lawrence, Sons and Lovers, chap. 8, p. 239. 255 Lawrence, The Rainbow, chap. 11, p. 322.
In *Women in Love* (1921), instead of one person annihilating the other, they both disappear in a new entity, which is one to such an extent that there are no longer an I and a Thou loving each other:

In the new, superfine bliss, a peace superseding knowledge, there was no I and you, there was only the third, unrealised wonder, the wonder of existing not as oneself, but in a consummation of my being and of her being in a new one, a new, paradisal unit regained from the duality. How can I say “I love you” when I have ceased to be, and you have ceased to be: we are both caught up and transcended into a new oneness where everything is silent, because there is nothing to answer, all is perfect and at one. Speech travels between the separate parts. But in the perfect One there is perfect silence of bliss.  

Gaylin proposes a similar idea:

> The common ingredient of all love is this merging of the self with another person or ideal, creating a new identity,

and he maintains that sexual love involves what he calls “fusion.”  

Other writers say that lovers do not become one but remain always two persons and this, they say, is agonising. In Charles Morgan’s *Sparkenbroke*, a woman muses:

> She remembered having read the complaints of some lover—a poet? a philosopher? she could not recall the form of the saying—that the agony of lovers was their powerlessness to surmount the barrier of individuality. Even in love, the writer had said, there is no escape from the eternal solitude of oneself. We kiss but cannot mingle. We clasp each other, but come no nearer. We would be one but remain two always.

She went on to remember that the writer had said that in the sexual act itself a man and a woman make the utmost endeavour “to pass beyond the division of their souls” but “they are mocked in it as two

---

19—The sexual relationship

birds are mocked who seek each other through a pane of glass.” In Hemingway’s *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Maria says that she and Robert Jordan are one, and she goes on: “But we are different. I would have us exactly the same…. I would be thee because I love thee.” Rudolf Allers writes:

> The communion, the identification of two beings, the being received into another, such as love conceives them, do not exist. Whatever they do, the spouses cannot interpenetrate or fuse into each other. An insuperable barrier separates them.

They are, he says, “never one person or one being” and, he says, in many cases they lament the fact that their desire for union is not satisfied.

Is this true to the experience of love at its best? No. When a couple love each other, they may say that they have

> Union of mind, or in us both one soul,

and they may also say:

> Let us become one flesh, being one soul,

but they remain, and want to remain, two distinct persons. An ideal sexual couple does not consist of a man who forms opinions and a woman who adopts them as soon as he makes them known, or of a man and a woman who by some miracle always think and feel as one, so that if, for instance, you ask them what they thought of a film either of them can speak for the two of them and say: “We liked it. We found the music a bit obtrusive but in our opinion the cinematography was superb.” In comparison with argumentative couples such pairs might seem, to superficial observers, to enjoy wonderful harmony, but what they have is unison, not harmony. As Scott Peck says, “A good

---

marriage can exist only between two strong and independent people, and this means that they never lose their twoness. Sexual lovers, then, want to be united but not to be one person. James McAuley says:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{You are yourself, and when we touch} \\
&\text{We understand the joy of being two,} \\
&\text{Not seeking to annihilate} \\
&\text{Distinction,}^\text{265}
\end{align*}
\]

and in *The Jeweller’s Shop*, which was published in Poland in 1960, Karol Wojtyla says of a couple:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{New people—Teresa and Andrew -} \\
&\text{two until now, but still not one,} \\
&\text{one from now on, though still two.}^\text{266}
\end{align*}
\]

Finally, in *Kangaroo* (1923), a later work than the ones I quoted above, D. H. Lawrence has a character say:

Love is mutual. Each attracts the other. But in natural love each tries at the same time to withhold the other, to keep the other true to its own beloved nature. To any true lover, it would be the greatest disaster if the beloved broke down from her own nature and self and began to identify herself with him, with his nature and self.\textsuperscript{267}

I said earlier that in an ecstatic union two persons are joined as equals. For centuries it was thought that while this may be true of friendship it is not true of sexual love, especially in marriage. Paul tells women to “give way to” their husbands (Col 3:18), in the marriage ceremony women vowed obedience to the men they were marrying, and it was generally understood that the husband-father was the head of the house. A character in Oliver Goldsmith’s *The Good-Natur’d Man* (1768) goes so far as to say: “Friendship is a disinterested commerce between equals; love [by which he obviously means sexual love] an

\textsuperscript{264} Peck, *The Road Less Travelled*, p. 104.  
\textsuperscript{265} McAuley, “Celebration of Love.”  
\textsuperscript{266} Wojtyla, *The Jeweller’s Shop*, p. 20.  
\textsuperscript{267} Lawrence, *Kangaroo*, ch. 7, p. 149.
The sexual relationship

abject intercourse between tyrants and slaves.”

Forty years ago I myself said that spouses are unequal. Now it is generally understood that love involves equality and this has led some feminists to the startling conclusion that, because men and women are unequal in our society, authentic love between men and women is impossible in it.

It seems to me probable that the earliest men and women were, like the primate males and females, unequal and that where human behaviour is strongly influenced by inherited animal patterns (that is, instincts), men and women are still unequal. With civilisation, however, has come a domination of spirit over sense and we have recently come to see that these inherited animal patterns should be superseded. It will not always be easy to achieve this, but sexual lovers, which principally means husbands and wives, should be as equal as friends. I cannot go into all that this means in practice, but one thing it means is that as a rule decisions about their life together should be made by both persons after a discussion in which they treat each other as equals: for instance, generally speaking, a man should not sell the family house without even telling his wife and then inform her that they will move to another house; and she should not, without consulting him, tell their children that she or he was married before. Moreover, in normal circumstances they should be equal as possessors of their property.

The objectivisation of this love: children

As I said above, when persons love each other with ecstatic love they express their love in words, actions and gifts. Lovers express their love


269 According to Irving Singer (in The Nature of Love, vol. 3, p. 419), Shulamith Firestone (in The Dialectic of Sex, 1970) and Elizabeth Rapaport (in an article in Philosophy of Sex: Contemporary Readings) argue that, because of inequality, authentic love between men and women cannot now exist but, they say, it will become possible when the sexes finally become equal. Ti-Grace Atkinson (in a 1974 article) maintains that it is inherently impossible.

270 See above, pp. 42-43.

271 Above, pp. 145-146.
above all by making love, which Jack Dominian says expresses love and also gratitude (not necessarily for any particular gift), hope (in the other person being there in the future), reconciliation (if there has been a rift), sexual identity, acceptance and equality. Besides having these spiritual meanings, making love is an animal experience in which a strong instinct comes into play, physical passion is aroused and sources of physical energy are tapped. Human beings make a bad mistake if they deny the spiritual in themselves and act like beasts; they also make a mistake if they deny the animal in themselves or feel that what is animal in them is not human.

Sexual lovers also live together and this means eating together, sleeping together, working together, being often together in the house and going out together: they thus objectivise or externalise their relationship. Moreover, they mingle their possessions and so make their house, with the things in it, mirror their union as persons. (When couples separate, the division of their things mirrors in a vivid and painful way the splitting of the united couples they had been.)

As I said earlier, an ecstatic union is objectivised in a “work of love” or third being which the persons produce together, and lovers objectivise their love in a child, who is an objective correlative of the parents as a united couple. Hegel said:

> The union of the marriage, which as substantial is only inwardness and affectivity, but as existing is divided in the two subjects, becomes in the child something that as unity has its own objective existence, and which the partners love as their love, as its substantial being,

and Ortega y Gasset echoed Hegel when he wrote that “the child is the personified union of the two.”

---

272 Above, p. 123.
L
ike all ecstatic love, full sexual love involves a promise of two persons to love each other always, and in the poetry and songs of sexual love words like “always” and “forever” are repeated over and over. As Jack Dominian says, “permanency is not an external imposition to bind people together but an internal dynamic to allow each the freedom to disclose his or her self and reach the inner core of the other.” When a couple have children, they have an additional reason for staying together, but when all is well with them they do not stay together “for the sake of the children”: rather, they decided to have children when they already wanted to stay together and felt sure that they would, and their attitudes have not changed.

Because sexual love is exclusive, the promise of permanence involves giving one’s word not to feel free to have a sexual relationship with anyone else. Does not this make it a bad thing, as the advocates of free love used to say and as the advocates of open marriage now say?

Many of us have found ourselves free for a time of most of the duties and obligations which we normally have—for instance, we have gone far away from home for two weeks of work, and found ourselves free of all professional and social obligations during the weekend between them. “Where will I go?” and “What will I do?,” we said to ourselves, enjoying the thought that we could do whatever we liked. Also, before becoming independent and settling down many young people have some years in which they have few obligations or restrictions: if they feel like taking a trip, they can, and they can go out with whom they please. To us whose time is not our own and who are restricted by duties and obligations, their freedom seems like a glorious dream.

The trouble is that if I have that kind of freedom and want to keep it, I must systematically abstain from making decisions about anything except the immediate future, for if I decide to do something next week I no longer have the indeterminateness of freedom for that time. I must even more carefully abstain from making promises to other persons, because if (for instance) I promise to have dinner with some people next Friday, I cease to be free on that night. If I choose freedom, then, I actually impose tremendous restrictions on myself and in the end am not free at all. That is, the kind of leaf-in-the-wind freedom which I have described is possible and enjoyable only as a transitory experience, in a lull before real life begins or in a time out from it.

Freedom, one may say, is like money, meant to be used. It is fun to have a sum of money which one does not have to spend on any particular thing, so that one can walk along a street with it in one’s pocket, look into shop windows and say to oneself, as one looks at one thing after another, “I am able to buy that.” If one makes a choice and buys something, has one lost the money? No. One no longer has it, but one has not lost it, one has bought something with it. One can no longer window-shop, saying “I could buy that” as one looks at goods on display; but one has the thing which one has bought. One has given up manifold possibility, the enjoyment of which is in the imagination only, and obtained one actuality, that of the real thing possession of which one can enjoy. If, however, in order to be able to enjoy window-shopping for ever, one were to decide never to spend the money, one would be preferring imaginary ownership of many things to the real ownership of anything. Moreover, by making that decision one would kill even the joy of window-shopping, for when one saw an article in a shop window one would have to pass by it quickly, saying to oneself: “I have enough money to buy that but I must not look at it because I’ve made up my mind never to spend my money.” It turns out that one has found a particular way of using the money which, like spending it, makes it unavailable for any other use; and this way of using it destroys its value, for money that is never going to be spent might as well be waste paper. If one is free in the sense of having no commitments, the rest of one’s life is like the sum of money with which one can do as one chooses. It is exciting for a young person to consider becoming an architect, a composer, an actor, a carpenter and
a dozen other things; it is pleasant for a single man who meets some attractive girls to know that he is free to court any of them; but if, in order to make this pleasure last a lifetime he decides never to choose a career, a spouse or friends, he prefers many imaginary satisfactions to a few real ones; in fact he abandons his uncommitted state and chooses a particular way of life, with the result that he can no longer think of other possibilities as open; and he renders his freedom worthless by using it in this way. In the last analysis, the option for free love is a binding commitment to having no love. If, however, a person promises to be true to another person in a permanent and exclusive sexual relationship, he “buys” the relationship with his freedom, which is not losing it.

Conflict

If conflict is unavoidable in almost any love-relationship, it almost always occurs in relationships of sexual love. I earlier quoted Fromm, who says that many people believe that “love means the absence of any conflict,” which, he says, is not true. He says that people tend to fear conflict because they see so many bad conflicts doing harm. They see couples who have serious disagreements not having the courage to talk about them but, instead, fighting over other matters, which are usually of minor importance. In these fights, the words are about the other matter but the feelings come from the serious disagreements. Such fights leave the couple as divided as before on the serious issues, since they are not faced, and they only make things worse. What such a couple needs to do, says Fromm, is face the serious issue and have a conflict about it. In an article on divorce Paula Ripple says: “The divorce process may begin when two people start to avoid conflict.” I would not, however, go so far as to say with Andrew Greeley: “Lovers must fight. They can only love if they fight: it enhances the quality of their love.”

Love can end

Some relationships gradually become pathological and cease to be love-relationships, if indeed they ever were. A husband, for instance, may gradually become more and more dogmatic in his utterances and contemptuous of his wife’s opinions; he may keep her under surveillance and constantly find fault with her; he may be insanely jealous even of her women friends; after a while she may conclude that he does not love her and that for her own survival as a person she must leave him. Another husband may do the opposite and become more and more dependent on his wife, expecting her to make all their decisions and most of his own (“What shirt will I wear today?,” he asks almost every morning) and by retreating into an almost infantile way of life changing her from his spouse into his foster-mother. She may then decide that their relationship is no longer that of a married couple and that for his sake as well as her own they should separate.

It is possible for a couple to lose their spiritual affinity. Some married men went to fight in wars, did not see their wives for some years, they and their wives were not good at expressing themselves in writing, and when the men returned they and their wives were so different that their old affinity had gone. In the play and film, *Educating Rita*, a working-class woman does a university course which changes her whole outlook while her husband stays the same. This is more likely to happen if the person is fairly young but men and women of mature age have been transformed in this way and have found that they and their spouses were no longer on the same wavelength, spiritually, and could talk only about practical matters, not about anything personal. The loss of affinity can also be spread over many years, as happens when a couple’s interests begin to diverge and they cease to talk about them to each other, when they have separate groups of friends and do not often go anywhere as a couple, or when one loses interest in religion while the other becomes deeply involved in it. Needless to say, if an engaged couple lose their spiritual affinity—if, for instance, they mean to get married when one of them has completed a course and if when that time comes they are no longer on the same spiritual plane—they break their engagement. If it happens to a married couple, especially if neither of them is attracted by an
alternative partner, they may continue to live amicably in the same house and have a love for each other which is comparable to the solidarity-love of comrades or colleagues. In this case, they talk to each other about practical matters, they carefully avoid offending each other, they “have sex” occasionally but they do not make love, they do not reveal their innermost selves to each other and at a deep level they lead separate lives. If one of them meets someone else and wants to break the relationship, the other may resent the inconvenience but feel no deep pain, and they may separate without hard feelings. On the other hand, when a couple lose their spiritual affinity they may soon cease to laugh at each other’s jokes or to be amused by each other’s pleasantries; they may become increasingly irritated by each other’s faults (for instance, bad grammar or unpunctuality, which in adults are virtually incurable); their arguments may quickly become quarrels; they may not be able to keep from admonishing each other in an almost contemptuous way in front of other people; until eventually they cannot stand it any longer and one of them goes, leaving the other feeling that he or she has won.

It also seems to be possible for a couple to lose what might be called their physical affinity, that is, to lose all sexual desire for each other and even to find the slightest physical contact abhorrent. This means the end of sexual love.

All this has been written in consultation with other people and I have been told to make it clear that if a husband and wife no longer find each other’s company as intoxicating as they did when they were courting or newly married, and if their love-making is no longer as thrilling as it was at first, this does not mean that sexual love has gone. The term “ecstatic,” which I use, could be taken to mean “exciting,” “thrilling,” “rapturous” and “overwhelming” and hence to mislead people into thinking that unless they are living in an exalted emotional state they do not have ecstatic love. As I said earlier, I use “ecstatic” as a technical term and it does not mean “thrilling”;280 and if people find that life has become fairly prosaic and that their love-making is not fantastic all the time, this does not mean that their love is over and that they would do well to separate and save themselves the agony of a lingering winding-down of their marriage. It is a matter of not having

280 Above, p. 126.
excessive, immature expectations, but also of not expecting too little, either, and some couples need to be more deeply communicative, more strongly emotional and also more passionate. Counsellors exist and courses are given to help people to achieve this.

I said earlier that ecstatic love, in either of its forms, can be ended by one person immorally rejecting the other. I said also that reconciliation is possible if the wrongdoer is sorry, asks forgiveness and is forgiven. At times couples do not break up, or break up and come together again, without repentance being offered or demanded: they stay together for the sake of the children, because a public break would hurt the man’s career, or because the woman has no future other than of her husband’s spouse. In these cases there is no more than the appearance of a reconciliation and there may one day be an outburst of repressed just anger. But let us suppose that there has been repentance and reconciliation: does this restore the relationship of sexual love? Sometimes, especially if not much time has elapsed, yes, it does. Suppose, however, that a man wrongfully leaves his wife, who thereafter lives alone, and that twenty years later he re-appears, tells her that he is sorry and humbly asks forgiveness. Making a great effort she forgives him in her heart and says, “I forgive you,” feeling as she says these words as if a painful darkness inside her has been dispelled by light. Does this, I now ask, mean that he will now move in with her or she with him? Or will they, though reconciled, continue to live separate lives? What do you think?

Love is eternal

Though love can end, it is evident that if persons form a sexual relationship with the intention of staying together exclusively and for ever, it must be normal for that promise to be kept or that intention to be realised, so that when lovers break up who have gone beyond the early stages of a relationship, committed themselves to each other and lived together for some time, no one should say, “That’s life,” as if it

281 Above, p. 125, where I refer to the last two chapters of my *Shadows and the Dark.*
were in the ordinary course of nature. When things go right, as they most often do, couples remain together and grow to love each other more and more deeply. Even when they lose their physical beauty, their love remains:

\[
\text{Love’s not Time’s fool, though rosy lips and cheeks} \\
\text{Within his bending sickle’s compass come,} \\
\text{Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,} \\
\text{But bears it out even to the edge of doom.}\]

Can love cross that edge? In Sartre’s play, *Lucifer and the Lord*, Hilda says:

\[
\text{Even if we do go [to heaven], both of us, we shall have no eyes to see each other, no hands to touch each other. In heaven, you have no time for anything but God. . . . You can only love on earth, and against the will of God.}\]

She is wrong, of course, for love on earth is not against the will of God and there is love between human beings in heaven and even if there is no sexual intercourse in the next life human beings are bodies there as well as souls—in Claudel’s *The Satin Slipper* Rodrigue says:

\[
\text{Did I say that it was her soul alone that I love? It is her whole self.} \\
\text{And I know that her soul is immortal, but the body is not less so.} \\
\text{And the two together make the seed which is destined to flower in another garden.}\]

**Marriage: the social institution**

As I will say later, there are no laws about friendship, and friendships are not registered with the government. When, however, people

---

282 Shakespeare, sonnet 116.
283 “On ne peut aimer que sur terre et contre Dieu” (Sartre, *Lucifer and the Lord*, act 2, scene 9, p. 118).
284 Claudel, *Le soulier de Satin*, 1st day, scene 7; *Théâtre*, II,684.
decide to have a relationship of sexual love, society expects (or at any rate expected) them to exchange vows in the presence of a registered celebrant and official witnesses, that is, to “get married,” and their marriage is recorded in a register and in government files. Some people object to this: for instance, Berdyaev writes:

I have always felt indignation at the interference of society in the erotic love of men and women…. Love is the most intimately personal experience in life, and society should not dare to interfere in it…. The world should remain ignorant of the love of every human being, since love is entirely beyond its pale.\(^\text{285}\)

Also, many couples now, taking the view that their relationship is their private business, refuse to do as society expects and, if they are Christians, as the Church demands. One must therefore ask: By what right does society demand or at least expect to oversee the joining of couples in abiding sexual unions when it does not do the same for friendships?

It seems to me that if sexual love had no connection with the having of children, society would probably not concern itself with sexual relationships, but because sexual lovers have children, and because the having and bringing up of children is vital to society, both church and state expect couples to get married. They have laws about who can get married and when and how; churches and at least some states have regulations designed to make people see that getting married is serious; also, many states have laws about the property of married persons and about the obligations of spouses to each other. Moreover, and more positively, at weddings the celebrant and guests manifest society’s approval of the marriages that are being celebrated and in various ways the Church, the state, voluntary organisations and friends assist couples to live together, to have children and to bring them up. As Jack Dominian says,

It is true that marriage is no guarantee of progressive and uninterrupted growth of love, but it does contain an essential commitment to a sustained effort to overcome the obstacles which prevent the growth of love by providing a framework of security which is so necessary for the sustenance and growth of love,\textsuperscript{286}

and marriage provides that framework partly because it is a social institution.

Gaylin says:

Marriage is a noble state, and if in its realisation it fails to satisfy its anticipations, it is still an ideal worth aspiring to.

Quoting another Gaylin, he goes on:

Marriage has been referred to by psychologist Ned Gaylin as “the institution for civilising” sexuality. Civilisation is certainly a human enterprise: the process of creating social organisation of a high order. To civilise anything, whether passion or sexuality, is to “elevate” it, to “improve” it, and to “refine it.” Civilisation of sexuality means bringing sexuality and the passions in general out of the wilderness of adolescent frenzy and into fusion with concepts of trust and service, justice and commitment, altruism and responsibility.\textsuperscript{287}

I would not limit frenzy to adolescents.

\textsuperscript{286} Dominian, “Sex Outside Marriage,” \textit{The Tablet} (London), 4 December 1976, p. 1174.

\textsuperscript{287} Gaylin, \textit{Adam and Eve and Pinocchio}, p. 227. The quotation within the quotation is from N. Gaylin, in M. Farber, ed., \textit{Human Sexuality: Psychosexual Effects of Disease}, pp. 40-54.
21 The significance of sexual love

Love is the primary relationship between persons and it can be argued that sexual love is the primary form of human love, as Vatican II implies when it says that marriage is “the primary form of interpersonal communion.” It certainly this relationship often has priority over relationships with parents, brothers and sisters, and usually friends—its demands may sometimes yield temporarily to those of children, but this is because of their dependence. It certainly brings great benefits with it.

Often it is sexual love that cracks a person’s egotism. Paul Claudel, who by his own admission was self-centred until in his early thirties he fell madly in love, was eloquent about this and returned to the theme over and over again. In The Satin Slipper an angel tells Prouhèze why she was sent by providence to Rodrigue:

That monster of pride, there was no other way to make him see his neighbour, to make the neighbour enter his being. There was no other way to make him understand dependence, need, another before himself. The pressure on him of this other being, different from himself, and who does nothing but be there.  

Teilhard de Chardin, who may have heard about this idea of Claudel’s, said: “Through woman and woman alone, man can escape from the isolation in which, even if perfected, he would still be in danger of being enclosed.” Certainly many people have led self-centred and even rather calculating lives and then suddenly, when they have fallen

---

288 Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes, # 12.
289 Claudel, Le soulier de Satin, 3rd day, scene 8; Théâtre, II.804.
290 Teilhard de Chardin, Human Energy, p. 74.
in love, they have stopped talking about themselves and begun to talk only—indeed, boringly—about their beloveds and they have become generous, spending money without a second thought and living for the other in a way that was marvellous to see. Jankélévitch writes:

Almost all men, even the most jealous and petty ones, have been at least once in their lives made generous by a love they felt for someone. The day it happened, the small-minded man was not stingy, the miser did not go over his accounts, the mean man did not wear his downcast, envious look and the merchant, instead of weighing and selling his mustard, gave it away free. There is no businessman, however hard he may have become, who does not recall with emotion his moments of generosity, oases of freshness and truth as they were in his tradesman’s existence; remembering with infinite gratitude those blessed moments in his youth when he, too, was generous, sincere and able to act solely for the pleasure of giving pleasure. Whoever has known, if only for an hour or two, the great, marvellous and refreshing simplification and the grave joy that love brings, can say: “I have lived.”

Just as getting a job means obtaining a place in the work-world, getting married often means for a couple that they “acquire a definite place in the social system” of which, as single persons, they had been on the edge.

It used to be said that there is a man’s world and a woman’s world, each of which has its values and obligations, and it was also said and felt that, while men and women inhabit each other’s worlds, sexual love at times draws men away from their proper work. In a work of Claudel’s a woman says: “As long as there are women, you will never achieve the construction of your city,” the construction of the city being “man’s work,” and in Night Flight, an early work of Saint-Exupéry, the two worlds and their conflict are vividly dramatised. In this novel an aeroplane pilot, Fabien (based on Saint-Exupéry), is overdue and two people are waiting for him anxiously in Buenos Aires: Rivière, the head of the airline, and Fabien’s wife (based on Saint-Exupéry’s wife, Consuela). Fabien’s wife goes to see Rivière:

291 Jankélévitch, Traité des vertus, pp. 529-530.
293 Claudel, Conversations dans le Loir-et-Cher.
Rivière faced, not the problem of a particular person’s distress, but the problem of action. Before him stood not Fabien’s wife but a different understanding of life. Rivière had to listen to the woman’s sad voice, an enemy voice. For neither action nor individual happiness admit sharing: they are in conflict. This woman spoke in the name of a world which had its absolutes, its values and its rights. A world with the brightness of a lamp on a table at evening, flesh calling to flesh, hopes, tenderness and memories. She demanded her due and she was in the right. And Rivière, too, was in the right, but he could not confront her truth.

At one stage of his life D. H. Lawrence seems to have felt that sexual love was keeping him from full participation in the larger world: this conflict is the theme of Kangaroo. On the other hand, many men not only resolved this conflict, if conflict it was, but were better husbands because of their work and better workers because of their marriages, and towards the end of his life Saint-Exupéry expressed this in words which I am sure sprang from his own experience:

I recognise no greatness except that of the warrior who puts down his arms to hug his child, or of the spouse who goes to war…. It is as a warrior that you make love and as a lover that you make war.

He who, far away, faces the dangers of battle gives more to his beloved, without her knowing it, for he gives her someone who is, as he who night and day cradles his beloved, but does not exist, does not.

We, however, have gone beyond the ideas of a man’s world and a woman’s world.

I talked earlier about the significance of ecstatic love, in both its forms, for society, the human race and indeed the universe. Little needs to be said specifically about sexual love, except the obvious thing that society and the race owe their continuance to it and that society at large needs happy married couples since, generally speaking, from

294 Saint-Exupéry, Vol de nuit, chap. 14; Oeuvres, p. 120.
295 Saint-Exupéry, Citadelle, § 50; Oeuvres, pp. 638-639 (see Wisdom, § 45, p. 144).
296 Ibid., § 52, p. 641 (see Wisdom, § 46, p. 146).
297 See above, p. 160.
happy homes come adults who have confidence in themselves and are relatively free of problems. Also, as I said, they unite their extended families and circles of friends, and their children can play a significant role in lessening strangeness and conflict. Teilhard said that mutual sexual attraction is of such fundamental importance that no scientific, philosophical or religious explanation of the world which does not accord to it “a structurally essential place” can be convincing.\textsuperscript{298}

\textsuperscript{298} Teilhard de Chardin, \textit{Human Energy}, p. 72.
Lust is unlikely to be mistaken for sexual or any other kind of love. Whereas love is for a person, lust is self-centred and tends to be violent and cruel. Shakespeare says that

\[
\text{till action, lust} \\
\text{Is perjur’d, murd’rous, bloody, full of blame,} \\
\text{Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust.}^{299}
\]

and whereas love is personal and free, lust tends to become compulsive. Finally, whereas love is constant, the lustful man craves change, either because he becomes disgusted with a woman as soon as he has used her, because he fears involvement, or because he is curious—Gustave Thibon says: “The thing that impels man to polygamy [he means promiscuity] is curiosity, it is the sin of the spirit infiltrating into the instinct.”^{300} The desire for conquests—for capturing people emotionally and then moving on, adding them to the collection—is likewise not love. Moreover, if people have strong sexual feelings for one another and also like one another, but do not definitely want their relationship to be exclusive and permanent, what they have for each other is not love, though they may think it is.

Need-“love”

Sometimes a man who lacks self-love feels a great need for a woman to listen to him, to sympathise with him, to cheer him up when he is

---

299 Shakespeare, sonnet 129.
300 Thibon, What God Has Joined Together, pp. 94-95.
depressed (which is often), to satisfy his sexual desires and to take care of him; and if he finds one who is willing to do all this he may believe that he loves her and tell her so in speeches that are all about how much he needs her. Also, some people have a need for affection which is neurotic and as such different from a normal person’s healthy desire to love and be loved: such people quickly become dependent on others who give them affection and think that they are in love. These self-centred feelings are not love.

Neither is a feeling for another person which is entirely based on the other’s needs. Men have felt pity for women in distress and mistaken the feeling for love: but pity is not love.301 Also, men have desired, even needed, to have a weak person to protect, to take care of and perhaps to mould, and finding a woman who was willing to be protected, taken care of and moulded, they have adopted her, thought that they loved her and married her; and women have found weak men, indulgently taken care of them, put them to bed when they came home drunk, tolerated their infidelities, submitted to their brutalities and believed that their feelings were love. In some of these cases the marriage has broken up and the caring partner has done exactly the same thing all over again with a similar partner. What I want to say about all this is that a feeling based almost entirely on the weakness of the one or the other person cannot be ecstatic love.

I am here denying the name of love to relationships which exist entirely or mainly because of need on one side or the other. In many, indeed perhaps in most, relationships of sexual love there is an element of need: in one corner of his heart the man is looking for a woman to replace his mother or to be the mother he never had, the woman wants the man to be at times a kind of father, each sees the other as in some measure a person in need who is crying out for assistance and each hopes to be able to answer that need and still that cry. In healthy relationships, however, such needs play a subordinate role and the persons love each other from strength to strength.

301 See above, p. 36.
“Romantic Passion”

There exists, in literature and presumably also in life, an experience which has been called “absolute love”\(^\text{302}\) or love at its highest pitch but which proves on analysis to be not love at all but a strange refined sensual delight of the imagination and the emotions. In *Passion and Society* Denis de Rougemont maintained that the “courtly love” which appeared in Languedoc at the end of the twelfth century was this experience; others have questioned this. Scheler called it “romantic pseudo-love”\(^\text{303}\) but with de Rougemont I will call it “romantic passion.” It can be found in the medieval poem *Tristan and Iseult* and Wagner’s opera *Tristan and Isolde* (first performed in 1865), and very clearly in Charles Morgan’s novel, *Sparkenbroke* (1936).

This experience is a state of “voluptuous longing,”\(^\text{304}\) of rapture and exaltation, of excitement and “new imaginative vitality” with perhaps a heightening of artistic creative powers.\(^\text{305}\) The “lover” relishes this for its own sake and for the sake of the artistic stimulus it may give, and this means that he is not primarily concerned about the woman whom he “loves.” In Béroul’s version of the story of Tristan and Iseult, Iseult says: “He does not love me, nor I him,”\(^\text{306}\) and de Rougemont comments:

Tristan and Iseult do not love one another. They say they don’t, and everything goes to prove it. What they love is love and being in love.\(^\text{307}\)

Charles Morgan says of Sparkenbroke and Mary that “as he went forward now, she became less important than the stimulus she had given and fled from his mind,”\(^\text{308}\) which in the light of all that I said earlier means that he did not love her.

---


\(^{304}\) Ibid.

\(^{305}\) Morgan, *Sparkenbroke*, book 2, chap. 9, p. 152 and passim.

\(^{306}\) Béroul, *Le Roman de Tristan*, line 1413.

\(^{307}\) De Rougemont, *Passion and Society*, p. 41.

If he does not love the woman, whom or what does he love? Sparkenbroke answers clearly when, in front of Mary, speaking to a third person, he says:

No one loves a woman for her own sake only—because she is she; he may desire her for that reason or be her friend for that reason, but if he says that he loves her for that reason he is no lover or is without understanding. He loves her only when he has poured into her a thousand aspirations and imaginings which have not their origin in her personality, and has, so to speak, re-created his whole being in her. What he loves is his idea, which crystallises in her person.309

The term “crystallisation” comes from Stendhal, who said that a nondescript branch of a tree, if thrown into salt-mines near Salzburg and left there, becomes covered with crystals and a thing of beauty; just so, Stendhal said, a man’s aspirations can crystallise about the image of some woman which he has in his mind and render her lovable to him.310 Since romantic passion is unrealistic, literary works about it are often written in highly poetic or archaic language and set in fantastic places.

A surprising fact about romantic passion is that it does not find fulfilment in sexual intercourse and certainly not in marriage and children: in some of the Tristan stories it is suggested that Tristan and Iseult abstain from intercourse, at least at times, and in Morgan’s novel Sparkenbroke and Mary never have intercourse (three times they are on the point of having it but they never do). I say that this is surprising, and yet it is logical, for sexual intercourse would end the “voluptuous longing” and de-idealise the beloved, and marriage and children would bring the lover down from the cloudy spheres of poetry into the world of prosaic actuality.

310 Stendhal, De l’amour, chap. 2. Stendhal regarded this book as his masterpiece and it became a European classic. Scheler was aware of its status when he attacked it in The Nature of Sympathy (part 2, chap. 1, pp. 159-160; cf. D’Arcy, The Mind and Heart of Love, p. 224). It was also attacked by Jaspers (Psychologie der Weltanschauungen, p. 129) and Ortega y Gasset (On Love, pp. 23-48).
Literature tells where romantic passion does seek fulfilment: in death. Sometimes it is the death of the other. It is said of one romantic heroine that, by dying, “obligingly, she effaced a little more the matter which aesthetic creation had to transcend, she gave freer course to poetisation.”\textsuperscript{311} The death of the beloved here is like the death of the child which is desired in a certain perverse form of “parental love.”\textsuperscript{312} Often what is desired as the fulfilment of love is the death of both the lover and the beloved. De Rougemont insists on this. “Unawares and in spite of themselves,” he says of Tristan and Iseult, “the lovers have never had but one desire—the desire for death,”\textsuperscript{313} and Sparkenbroke is obsessed by death, which he desires as an ecstasy and a fulfilment. Whereas sexual lovers want to \textit{live} and to create life, romantic passion desires a \textit{Liebestod} or love-death.

\textsuperscript{311} Gargam, \textit{L’amour et la mort}, p. 81.
\textsuperscript{312} See above, p. 92.
\textsuperscript{313} De Rougemont, \textit{Passion and Society}, p. 46; see the whole section, pp. 42-46 and p. 53.
In novels and films there is more about sexual love than about friendship, compared with the thousands of songs about sexual love there are not many friendship-songs, hundreds of books analyse sexual love whereas few are written about friendship, and I myself in this book have five chapters on sexual love and only this one on friendship. Moralists discuss sexual ethics, few have anything to say about the obligations which friendship creates. Graham Little says that when sociology, anthropology and the other social sciences began to develop, the scientists who worked in them studied kinship and other social phenomena but not friendship—“The fathers of sociology,” he says, “were not curious about friendship.” He also says that though Freud had friends (one of whom was a woman, Lou Andreas Salome), he concentrated on the family to such an extent that friendship was all but absent from his works and he was contemptuous of it. Perhaps because of his pervasive influence, many people came to think that sexual love is the only real love and that friendships are either unconsciously sexual relationships, poor imitations of sexual love or meagre substitutes for it. The word “love” was then used almost exclusively for sexual love, so that what was called a love story or a love song was always about sexual love, and many people avoided using the word “love” of friends. Should I have put that in the past tense? Do people talk differently now? Whatever about people now, the outlook of the ancient Greeks was different. To Aristotle, who wrote two great chapters about love in his *Ethics*, love (*philia*) in the first place meant

---

314 Little, *Friendship*, p. 31.
friendship and C. S. Lewis says that “to the Ancients, Friendship seemed the happiest and most fully human of all loves; the crown of life and the school of virtue.” It was important to the Jewish people in Old Testament times, as one can tell from passages like this:

A faithful friend is a sure shelter,  
whoever finds one has found a rare treasure.  
A faithful friend is something beyond price,  
there is no measuring his worth.  
A faithful friend is the elixir of life,  
and those who fear the Lord will find one.  
Whoever fears the Lord makes true friends,  
for as a man is, so is his friend. (Si 6:14-17.)

It was important to Jesus, as I will say again later. Finally, Jules Toner says that since 1970 a good deal of attention has been given to friendship by philosophers, theologians, psychologists and others, and his own and Graham Little’s books are signs of this.

I have mentioned acquaintanceships, or what we have with people whom we say we know and like. These are important to us as individuals, since we can have hundreds of them and so be linked with many people, of different ages, religions, nationalities, occupations and levels of education. They are also important for society, since they are like a fine web tying people together by the hundred. Friendships, however, are vastly more serious, more demanding, more rewarding and lasting relationships.

I spoke earlier of comradeship, which, I maintained, is a form of solidarity-love. John Glenn Gray, in the splendid pages of The Warriors which he devotes to friendship, says that it is essentially different from comradeship. Intellectual and emotional affinity is necessary for friendship, he says, not for comradeship; friends know one another personally, this is not necessary for comradeship; friendship is lasting, comradeship often is not; finally, whereas comrades are conscious of the group, friendship brings with it “a heightened awareness of the self”—friends, he says, “find themselves in each other and thereby gain greater self-knowledge and self-possession.” This, needless to say, is not why people become friends:

316 C. S. Lewis, The Four Loves, p. 69.  
317 Toner, Love and Friendship, p. 183.  
This fact does not make friendship a higher form of selfishness, as some misguided people have thought, for we do not seek such advantages in friendship for ourselves. Our concern, in so far as we are genuine friends, is for the friend.\(^{319}\)

Except in a broad sense this is not a book of ethics and I did not go into questions of sexual ethics, but because little is said about the moral obligations of friends I shall touch on them here. When people become friends, in the full sense of the word, they make promises to each other that are like marriage vows; since we are morally obliged to keep our promises, by promising we acquire moral obligations. Neither may simply, without adequate justification, choose to terminate a friendship: if, for example, one of the friends rises in the world and thinks that it would be to his advantage to break with an old friend and make some other ones at his new level or above it, that is wrong, since he implicitly promised to be always the other’s friend. Even more clearly, if the two become rivals in some way—for promotion to the same job, let us say—it would be doubly wrong for one of them to use an unfair tactic to beat the other, thus sacrificing the friendship to win the promotion. More positively, if something is happening in my life which a person would normally tell his friends about, I must tell them, and if a friend wants to tell me something significant I am obliged to listen to him or her. If a friend badly needs information or some thing which I am free to give him, I must offer it to him; and if I am in need of advice or help and genuine friends offer it, I ought as a rule to accept. “I love you” is an expression of sexual love more often than of friendship. When, however, friends talk together as only friends would talk, they give implicit verbal expression to their relationship and confirm their understanding of it. Moreover, friends give things to each other and help each other with jobs, so that in the home of each there are things which the other gave, mended, helped to make or gave advice about. Moreover, Teilhard says:

Great friendships are formed in the pursuit of an ideal, in defence of a cause, in the ups-and-downs of research. Their development is not so much a permeation of “one by the other” as a joint progress through a new world.\(^{320}\)

\(^{319}\) Ibid., p. 90.  
\(^{320}\) Teilhard de Chardin, *Human Energy*, p. 79.
And a character in one of Simone de Beauvoir’s novels says:

If a man and woman hurl themselves into the future in a work which they make together, in children whom they have together, or in this world which their united wills form, they become indissolubly united.\footnote{De Beauvoir, \textit{Les bouches inutiles}, act 1, scene 3, p. 35.}

The children are, of course, peculiar to sexual love, but the rest is valid for friendship as well.

The necessity of friendship

As ecstatic love in some form is a necessity, a person who does not have a sexual love has an absolute need for friendship. Menninger says:

The man with no friends has already abandoned himself to the fate of his own self-destructiveness. Psychiatrists realise from clinical experience what poets have proclaimed in inspired verse, that to retreat permanently into the loneliness of one’s own soul is to surrender one’s claim upon life.\footnote{Menninger, \textit{Love Against Hate}, p. 271.}

Married couples, too, need friends, for a couple who have each other but no friends may be guilty of pair-selfishness and can experience a kind of pair-loneliness.\footnote{Fromm, \textit{The Art of Loving}, pp. 43-44.}

Kinds of friendship

Many authors say that there are different kinds of friendship but most of them, I believe, regard only one of their kinds as true friendship. Aristotle looked around him and saw certain men, who were said to
be friends, exchanging information or assisting each other in other ways; he judged that mutual advantage was the entire reason for their relationship, if relationship it could be called; and so in his chapters on friendship he said that some men are friends because it is to their mutual advantage; but, as I said earlier, he did not regard these relationships as friendships, properly so called, which he went on to discuss. 324 Graham Little talks about social, familial and communicating friendship, but he says that the first two types are “impure.” 325 For my part, I believe that for most people the ideal is to have a large number of friends, with many of whom their relationships are probably what Little would call social or familial; among these, a smaller but still quite large number are good friends; and among these are a rather small number of close friends. It is of the last kind of friendship that I shall be mainly talking.

Maslow clearly has close friends in mind when he says that a deep and mature person, whom he calls a “self-actualising” person, normally has neither just one nor many friends but a few (he is no more specific than that), whom he loves deeply and with whom he achieves “greater love, more perfect identification, more obliteration of the ego boundaries than other people would consider possible.” 326 These are the few people whom a sick or dying person, who could not cope with many visitors and does not want to be left entirely alone, wants by his side, as Jesus wanted Peter, James and John, and only them, to watch with him in the Garden on the night before his death. But those three men were not Jesus’ only friends. The other apostles were his good friends, so were the members of the family at Bethany, and most people have a number of good friends, whom they love and by whom they are loved but with whom they are not as closely united as they are with their close friends. Beyond these there are, generally, many friends who are not precisely “good friends,” just friends. Terribly sad is the lot of the person who knows hundreds of people but has no friends; unfortunate, too, is the person who has many friends but no close friends; and the interpersonal and affective life of someone who has a spouse and one or two close friends, and who keeps everyone else

324 See above, p. 105, note.
325 Little, Friendship, p. 14 and throughout the book.
326 Maslow, Motivation and Personality, p. 218.
at a distance, is more restricted than it ought to be. The ideal is to have many different kinds of relationship, linking one with many people, and to know where one is with each of them.

Groups of friends

Because friendship is not exclusive, small groups sometimes form in which each person is a close friend of all the others. Larger groups form in which everyone is a friend of everyone else and in which some of the friendships are “good” or “close.” It is common today to lament the disappearance of the extended family—people, it is said, are no longer in constant touch with their parents; brothers and sisters go their separate ways when they grow up; and children no longer grow up constantly seeing their grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. Well, first, as we saw earlier, when blood was thicker than water “the family” was sometimes a selfish monster, sacrificing its own members to its greed.327 Second, many people are still united in love with their parents, brothers and sisters, and even when families are scattered around the globe they keep in touch by letter, telephone and travel. Third, to come to the point, many people today belong to circles of friends, made up of married couples and some single persons, whom they see constantly; when there is something to celebrate, these friends join them and when there is trouble they lend support; and the children of these couples grow up knowing, constantly seeing, and occasionally staying with their parents’ friends and their children. These groups of friends are often as united and supportive as any extended family could be so that it is wrong to suppose that the dissolution of the extended family has meant isolation for nuclear families. Moreover, as friendships are less instinctive and more free than blood relationships, it is arguable that they represent a cultural advance.

A community of friends needs to objectivise itself and so at times all the members of a group of friends gather for a meal or for drinks and

327 See above, p. 95.
talk. When one of them marries, has a child or enjoys some success, the others come to celebrate it. When one suffers a bereavement, all attend the funeral. In these gatherings the community or group, as Rahner says, “concretises itself, makes itself apparent, takes on historical tangibility” or achieves “self-objectivisation” and it must do that or it will evaporate.328

Friendship and society

When people become friends, they do not take public vows of friendship as sexual couples take public marriage vows, their unions are not recorded in a register and while we have marriage-guidance clinics we do not have friendship-guidance clinics. That is, society does not as a rule take friendship into account. Most of the time this does not matter, but I believe that at times it has unfortunate consequences. For instance, if someone has a serious accident and is taken to hospital, his spouse, parents, brothers and sisters are allowed past the “No Visitors” sign without question but even his closest friends, whom he would rather have with him than some members of his family, may find themselves kept away unless someone in the family can speak for them or the person is conscious enough to be told about them and to say, “Let them in.”329 Similarly, at funerals the dead person’s relatives, with their spouses and children, are often placed in the front rows of the church while close friends, who meant far more to him or her than at least some of the relatives, find places for themselves in the body of the church. I am not proposing that governments require that friendships be announced like engagements or registered like marriages, only saying that at important moments, especially when the persons concerned cannot make arrangements, it is wrong to work on the principle that the family matters and friends do not.

329 Now that many people are living together without being married, many hospitals admit “partners” “in the same way as they admit spouses and close relatives, and I am told that some recognise close non-sexual friendship as a title to admission.
Friendship is eternal

I said earlier that ecstatic love can end. Friendships sometimes end when people who were on an equal footing when they were young come to be different from each other in wealth, social status or rank (this does them no credit since it is possible for people to be friends across such differences, but it happens). Friendship can also, like sexual love, come to an end when one of the persons is greatly changed by life-experiences or when the two persons’ lives take them spiritually away from each other, so that they find when they meet that words do not come easily and, as if by mutual agreement, they do not talk at length or in a very personal way. Also, as I said earlier, friendships can be deliberately and immorally broken. Friendships, however, are meant to last for ever and they often do. Many people keep their friendships even when they change their spouses, their jobs and almost everything else in their lives. Moreover, friends who have not seen each other for many years come together, or find themselves together, again and talk as if they had never been apart. This is not rare, and it is wonderful.

The significance of friendship

I said earlier that all human beings are becoming united in solidarity-love and that ecstatic love, though it is not so general, plays a part in this process. To an ever greater extent men and women are travelling, in their own countries and abroad, and friendships are uniting thousands, perhaps millions, of people who, if they had lived a century ago, would never have met one another. In his book on friendship Toner has a chapter on what he calls “the dynamism to universal personal friendship.” I feel that this is utopian, not because a universal love is intrinsically impossible but because what is coming into being is a universal solidarity-love, not a universal friendship.

Part 5

The Two Loves
To sum up, the chief differences between solidarity-love and ecstatic love are these:

Solidarity-love presupposes a bond between the person who loves and the person who is loved, which bond is the reason for the love. Ecstatic love presupposes no bond between the persons involved: instead, it makes a bond exist between persons who previously were not connected in any special way.

In solidarity-love one person sees in another that which is common to that person and himself or herself. In ecstatic love a person sees the other as unique, distinct and as other.

In relationships of solidarity-love we do not choose whom we love; in ecstatic love, we do.

Persons have a right to solidarity-love—for instance, children have a right to their parents’ love—but no one has a right to anyone else’s ecstatic love. That is, in particular cases solidarity-love is obligatory but ecstatic love is not.

Ecstatic love requires psychological affinity but it is possible to love with solidarity-love people with whom psychologically one has nothing in common and people whom one dislikes.

For ecstatic love persons have to meet and communicate with one another, to do things together and to share experiences. It is possible to love with solidarity-love people whom we have never seen and even people of whose existence we know only in a general way. Thus ecstatic love is more “historical” than solidarity-love.

In ecstatic love persons, however unequal they may be outside the relationship, treat each other as equals. In solidarity-love persons are sometimes, like parents and children, unequal in the love-relationship. At other times they are equals, which is why it is incorrect to sum
up my theory by saying that according to me there are two kinds of love, one between unequals and the other between equals.

In solidarity-love there is a movement from objectivity into subjectivity: beforehand, two persons are, as a matter of objective fact, connected; in loving one another they recognise and accept this and so come to be linked in their subjectivities, by love. In ecstatic love the movement is in the opposite direction: persons find and love each other as subjects and at this stage they are united only in subjectivity; then they objectivise or externalise their love in objectively real words, actions and beings.

Most basically, in solidarity-love one person loves another, but not as a person; in ecstatic love the other is loved as a person. Anyone who reads this without having read what I said in earlier chapters may think it an absurd thing to say, and I ask such a person not to make that judgement without reading the whole of this book.

Finally, there are two basic tendencies in beings: there is the radiating tendency of beings to emit goodness and to spread it out; there is also the convergent tendency of beings to come together or to cluster. Solidarity-love is primarily connected with the first of these tendencies, ecstatic love with the second. This is most evident when parental love is compared with sexual love, for parents and children begin by being together and later they separate, whereas a man and a woman begin by being apart, then they meet, fall in love, get married and thereafter remain together. As Fromm says, “in erotic love, two people who were separate become one. In motherly love, two people who were one become separate.”

The two loves

I trust that it is clear that both these kinds of love are, properly speaking, love. Neither is desire, both are altruistic; and both, in their primary forms, are permanent. Both loves are found in the family: the

332 Fromm, The Art of Loving, p. 41.
love of the husband and wife for each other is ecstatic, the love between them and the children, and between the children, is solidarity-love.

As I said earlier, a great philosophical problem is that of the One and the Many, which appears in various forms. Scholastic philosophers always approached this problem believing that the Many comes from the One: for instance, faced with the problem of universals, or one concept verified in many individuals, whereas empiricists derived the one from the many by saying that when we see what various birds (for instance) have in common we form the general idea of bird, scholastic philosophers said that there is and always has been a nature of bird which is realised in various individuals and which is expressed by our universal concept: that is, the many comes from the one. They also maintained that the Greater cannot come from the Less and hence that, as a general principle, what comes early in any series is greater than what comes later. This means that the One is always better than the Many: indeed, they maintained that “Being is one, true and good,” which by implication put the many with the false and the bad. This would imply that self-love, in which there is pure unity, is the greatest love and the ultimate source of all other loves, with solidarity-love, which has the many in it but is based on unity, coming second and ecstatic love, which is based on otherness, coming last. Often, however, the Less is a jumping-off point for the Greater. This is the case here and solidarity-love of other persons is an advance on self-love, while ecstatic love is an advance on solidarity-love and takes persons to a higher level.

If Teilhard was right, evolution or the construction of the universe involves a series of phases. In the first phase, now complete, human beings spread over the earth, moving ever outwards until they covered it. In the second phase, which we are in now, human beings are becoming more and more united, by lines of communication and most of all by love in its various forms, so that “it is love which is physically constructing the universe.”

The co-existence of the two loves

Sometimes, when a teenage son or daughter becomes a person with definite ideas and plans, or when he or she grows up and ceases to be subject to the authority of the parents, he or she and either parent or both parents become friends. That is, the parent-child relationship does not make friendship impossible. Neither does the friendship destroy the earlier relationship: the two loves co-exist, and the two persons talk to one another sometimes as parent and child, at other times as friends. If in a large family there is a friendship between a man and his daughter, when all are present he may talk to her as he does to all his sons and daughters, as sons and daughters, but when the two of them are alone together he may switch to talking to her as a friend. Not that the division is watertight: each relationship subtly affects the other. Probably, as time goes on they more and more relate to one another as friends, but the other love is always there, as it were subordinate to the friendship.

Also, if a teacher and student have a quasi-parental relationship and later become colleagues, they may become friends and as such equal but the one who was the student may always think of the other as “my old teacher” and feel respect and gratitude towards him or her, even if they find themselves in disagreement.

Also, siblings can become friends while continuing to love one another as siblings. This does not necessarily happen: in a family of four sons and daughters there are six sibling-pairs, only one or two of which may be friendships.

Sometimes ecstatic love ends, leaving solidarity-love

I said earlier than ecstatic love can end, and an underlying solidarity-love can then become the only love which unites a couple. For instance, as I said earlier, a husband and wife can lose their spiritual affinity and talk to one another only about their children or about practical matters. If they stay together, the fact that they are parents
of the same children and are members of the same family can be not only the practical reason why they stay together but the basis of a love which is actually a form of solidarity-love. Indeed, if they separate they may continue to have a kind of solidarity-love for one another, such as is common in members of families who have little to do with one another. Also, it can happen that two brothers became not only brothers but also friends when they were young men, then went separate ways and now find when they meet that they have little to say to one another when they have finished exchanging news about their respective families; in this case, they may be no longer friends, but they are still brothers, who love each other as such.

At times there is trouble. Let me tell this story:

James and Susan fell in love. Her parents had died when she was young, so that there was a gap in her life where her parents should have been, and his parents had not had a daughter. Partly as a result of this, when she and his parents found that they got on marvellously well, a very close bond was quickly established so that when the couple got married it became clear that for his parents she was now, and in her own right, a treasured member of the family and their to-all-intents-and-purposes daughter. Years went by, they all grew older and then James met a younger woman and began an affair with her; Susan did not have definite knowledge of this, but she knew something was wrong and suffered greatly; so did his parents, who felt for her. Eventually James abandoned secrecy, left Susan, obtained a divorce and cruelly employed a tough firm of solicitors to keep his financial obligations to her and the children to a minimum. He also put totally false stories about her into circulation, saying that she had turned his parents and children against him by telling lies. His parents were shocked and made their horror at his behaviour known to him, but he told them to mind their own business. Christmas Day was coming and, after talking the matter over together, James’s parents told Susan that she was still a member of the family and that they hoped that she would come to them for dinner on Christmas Day, bringing her children—James, they said, will probably not have the nerve to come and if he does ask us he will be told that he is not welcome. It was not a question of their punishing him by kicking him out of the family; it was a question of their facing the fact that he had split with the family. Also, they
said, it is not that we do not love him any more: we do, and our love for him is a cause of grief to us, but we see that he has rejected you and us, and we will not pretend that this has not happened.

In this case the ecstatic love which had come into being between the adult James and his parents has ended, but the solidarity-love has remained, at least in them.

Love, value-theory and morality: two philosophies

To make sense of human life, and to ground a morality, thinkers have looked for a reality that has value in itself and is the source of value in other things; and an experience which is the prime way of appropriating this reality and so giving one’s own life a meaning. This has then become the basis of their morality.

For instance, for some thinkers evolution is the reality which has value in itself and is the source of value in other things. They say that religion has value in so far as it contributes to evolution; they may say that it used to contribute to it but does not do that now, so that it no longer has any value. For such thinkers, it is by action which advances evolution that we link ourselves to it, the source of value, and so give our lives meaning. They say, finally, that actions are good or bad in so far as they advance or hinder evolution.

Scholastic philosophers believed that being has value. By “being” they meant objective reality and they did not use the word “value” but said, “Being is good.” They went on to say that only being is good, so that nothing is good except in so far as it is a being. Most of them believed that it is by intellectual knowledge and understanding that we grasp being. They were thus intellectualists and Rousselot, whose book about love I shall discuss later, began his book on intellectualism by saying:

I understand by intellectualism the doctrine which places the supreme value and intensity of life in an act of intellect, that sees in this act the radical and essential good, and regards all things else as good only in so far as they participate in it.334
In *Insight* (1957) Bernard Lonergan identified goodness and intelligibility: we should, he said, “conceive the good as identical with the intelligibility that is intrinsic to being,” and “it will not be amiss to assert emphatically that the identification of being and the good bypasses human feelings and sentiments to take its stand exclusively upon intelligible order and rational value.” According to this view, to find value or the good we must with detachment and disinterestedness seek knowledge of being. All else is secondary. Communication with others, for instance, is important because by talking to each other people communicate what they have learned to the rest of mankind and are aided in their own inquiries:

Talking is a basic human art. By it each communicates to others what he knows and, at the same time, provokes the contradictions that direct his attention to what he has overlooked.

When philosophers of this school analysed love, which was not often, they discussed only solidarity-love, which is based on objectively real commonality. Finally, as they defined rationality or intellectual health as the conformity of the mind to being, so they defined moral goodness as the conformity of the will to the rational intellect and so to being. Love, they said, is good when it is rational, *because* it is rational; and hate is bad when it is irrational, *because* it is irrational. Pascal was an intellectualist when he said that “man’s whole dignity consists in thought” and that our basic moral obligation is “to think well,” and Lonergan was consistent in his intellectualism when he said that the root of sin is egoism, which is “an incomplete development of intelligence” or “an exclusion of correct understanding.” He also said: “Among the evils that afflict man, none is graver than the erroneous beliefs which at once distort his mind and make systematic the aberrations of his conduct.”

---

336 Ibid., p. 174.
Over a century ago, however, people began to affirm the supreme value of persons. Around 1880 T. H. Green of Oxford said:

There can be nothing in a nation however exalted its mission, or in a society however perfectly organised, which is not in the persons composing the nation or the society. Our ultimate standard of worth is an ideal of personal worth. All other values are relative to value for, of, or in a person. To speak of any progress or improvement of a nation or society or mankind, except as relative to some greater worth of persons, is to use words without meaning.340

Several personalist movements appeared and Rahner later said:

When we say that man’s self-understanding and definitive free self-disposition occurs in the act of loving communication with a Thou, we also affirm that in this act of love of neighbour the whole mystery of man is concentrated and actualised. We declare that all statements about man must be interpreted as statements about this love, which is the totality of his life.341

When personalists discuss love, which they do often, they have what I call ecstatic love, which is for persons as persons, in mind. And whereas scholastic philosophers based morality on rationality and being, personalists base it on love of the person, and instead of saying, with Lonergan, that the basic evil is error, they believe that it is hate of a person. As Rahner says, not too clearly, “the one moral (or immoral) basic act, in which one returns to himself and disposes of himself, is the loving (or hating) communication with a concrete Thou.”342

339 Ibid., p. 687.
340 Green, Prologomena to Ethics, p. 193.
341 Rahner, “The Unity of Love of God and Love of Neighbour,” Theology Digest, 15(1967)91. The complete text is in Theological Investigations, VI, p. 241. The difference between Lonergan (1900-1984) and Rahner (1904-84), two Jesuit philosopher-theologians who were working at the same time, appears clearly in the passages I have quoted and it is radical.
Criticism and a suggested synthesis

To the intellectualists it must be said that while error is bad, hate of a person is evil, not because it is based on an error (sometimes it is not) nor because it is irrational, but in itself, because persons are to be loved, not hated. Also, if knowledge and power are linked to hate, the effects are appalling. Moreover, whereas intellectualists condemn as irrational and therefore immoral a lot of the playful behaviour in which people who love each other indulge, the truth is that such behaviour, when it springs from love and promotes love, is highly moral. Finally, since music and wine impair our ability to think in a completely cool, rational way, intellectualists tend to be against them on moral grounds; but if they are the food and drink of love they are actually aids to moral goodness and, precisely as moralists, we should be for them. Surely this is right. Paradoxical as it may seem, the being-centred intellectualism of the scholastic philosophers whom I have quoted is somewhat unreasonable.

Intellectualists argue that every human experience, including love, presupposes intelligence and that therefore intellectual activity is more basic than every other kind of human experience, including love. They therefore define man as the rational (not, for instance, the loving) animal and they maintain that, in essence, being human means being rational. Priority of this kind, however, does not necessarily imply superiority in value: a doctor cannot cure a patient unless he knows what is wrong with him but this does not mean that diagnosis is more important than cure, I cannot love someone unless I know him but this does not mean that it is better to know him than to love him, and I cannot love anyone unless I am a rational being but this does not mean that it is better to be rational than to love.

On the other hand, being is good, and we want both to know it and to participate actively in making it. As infants, we explored our surroundings and interminably asked “Why?,” and throughout our

---

lives we have sought knowledge and understanding, or the truth. We also have a creative drive or a tendency to make things and get things done, which is why unemployed people suffer deeply and handicapped people go to such lengths to learn how to make things, even when they have love.

I therefore maintain that there are two ultimate values, being and the person; two deep needs, one for knowledge and understanding of being and the other for love-relationships with other persons; two moral obligations, to be rational and constructive, and to love; two bad things, the wilful and unnecessary destruction of being and hatred of persons; and two kinds of love, solidarity-love and ecstatic love.
25 Two theories of love

Almost everyone who writes about love divides it into different species: the scholastic philosophers distinguished between benevolence-love and desire-love, Nygren wrote about agape and eros, C. S. Lewis wrote *The Four Loves*, and in this book I am writing about solidarity-love and ecstatic love. One distinction which is often made, in various forms, is between a love in which one person sees another as a source of benefit for himself and a love in which he desires only the good of the other, but this is unacceptable because while it is not necessarily wrong to see another person as a source of benefit to oneself, and even to have a great appreciation of him or her on this account, this attitude is not love in any proper sense of the word. I will now outline two theories of love which were presented by Pierre Rousselot in 1908, in *The Problem of Love in the Middle Ages*. He called them the Physical and Ecstatic Theories.

The Physical Theory of love

Today the word “physical” generally means “bodily,” as in “physical fitness,” and “physical love” used to be a term for sexual intercourse, but the Physical Theory of love gets its name from *physis*, meaning nature, not the body. It has two forms, one of which can be summed up as follows:

1. Every being loves itself and seeks what is good for it. This is in no need of explanation. What needs explanation is how it is possible for a being to love another being.

2. A being loves itself for *what it is* or for its *nature*—that is, one loves oneself as a man or a woman, as a human being, ultimately as a being.
(3) To have an attitude towards something because of what it is is implicitly to have the same attitude towards all the other beings which are the same. For instance, if you see bullfighting for the first time, enjoy it hugely and find that what you enjoy pertains to the very nature of the sport, then you love bullfighting and implicitly love all the corridas that have been held, are being held or will be held. When, then, you love yourself as a man or a woman, you love “man” or “woman” and implicitly love all men or women; when you love yourself as a human being you implicitly love all human beings; and in loving yourself as a being you implicitly love all beings.

(4) If I have a certain attitude towards a whole group of beings and actually encounter a member of the group, my implicit attitude towards him, her or it becomes explicit. If, for instance, I love bullfighting and in a television news programme find myself watching a particular bullfight, my general love becomes focussed on it and I enjoy that particular bullfight. Similarly, if I love human beings in general and come across some particular human beings, I love them.

(5) Thus we have explained what we set out to explain, namely how it is possible for one human being to love another. The key to the explanation is a shared nature, which is of course why this is called the Physical Theory. According to those who hold it, all love of other people can be explained in this way or, as Rousselot said, “there is no other principle of direct and true love besides unity.”

The other form of the Physical Theory is as follows:

(1) The whole is greater than its parts; the universe, then, is of more value than individual beings in it and the species is worth more than individuals.

(2) Beings, therefore, naturally love the wholes of which they are parts more than they love themselves as particular beings. Thomas Aquinas says:

In nature, every being which by its nature belongs to something is more principally and more intensely concerned about it than about itself… . Every part naturally loves the whole more than itself, and every particular being naturally loves the good of the species more

than its own particular good…. [Every being] has a much greater inclination to what is without qualification the universal good.344

(3) When a being loves the whole of which it is a part, it naturally loves all the other beings which are other parts of the same whole: human beings, then, love all other human beings; moreover, all beings, as parts of the universe, love all other beings.

The Physical Theory, in its first form, was proposed by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.345 Thomas Aquinas learned about it from him and proposed it with great clarity:

Properly speaking, likeness is the cause of love…. For from the fact that any two are alike, they have as it were one form [nature] and are one in that form; thus two human beings are one in the species of humanity, and two whites are one in whiteness. And so the affection of one goes to the other, as to someone who is one with him, and he wills good to the other as he wills it to himself.346

He said: “The affection of the lover is fixed first on himself and from there goes by derivation to others.”347 Most twentieth-century Thomists who discussed love presented this theory, insisting—sometimes vehemently—that love is always based on “entitative similitude,” on “having the same perfection” or on “the common possession of some nature.” When people talk to one another, these authors say, this may help them to find that they have objective qualities in common and thus to love each other, but the basis of the love is always objective similitude.

This theory has often been misunderstood and found to be offensive. To be fair to it one must bear in mind that self-love is good. If when people hear the word “self-love” they think it means selfishness,

344 “Unumquodque autem in rebus naturalibus, quod secundum naturam hoc ipsum quod est, alterius est, principalius et magis inclinatur in id cuius est, quam in seipsum…. Unaquaeque pars diligit naturaliter totum plus quam se. Et quodlibet singulare naturaliter diligit plus bonum suae speciei, quam bonum suum singulare…. Multo magis habet naturalem inclinationem unumquodque in id quod est bonum universale simpliciter.” Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1 60 5 c, ad 1 and ad 3.


they naturally object to the idea that love of others springs from it for this seems to them to mean that we “love” other people when it is in our own interest to do so. As we have seen, self-love is the opposite of selfishness and it is the source in us of other-directed as well as of self-seeking activity. We must also bear in mind that to say that one thing has its origin in another is not to say that it is the same as that other: hence to say that love of others originates from self-love is not to imply that “loving” other people is really loving oneself, not them. According to the Physical Theory, the love which people have for others is distinct from the love which they have for themselves and it is really a love of those others.

The Ecstatic Theory of love

Rousselot called the other theory the Ecstatic Theory, but it was not a theory in the sense of an explanation: rather, it was a description of love, which was declared to be inexplicable. Authors of this school were virtually unanimous in saying that love of another person is not an extension of self-love: in loving another, they said, my will goes away from me or out of me to the other. Going-out-of-self or ecstasy was their key idea and they were able to quote “Denis the Areopagite,” who had said: Love is ecstatic, not allowing the lovers to belong to themselves, but making them belong to their beloveds.”

They maintained that love between two people is not based on a common element in their natures: as Rousselot said, their idea of love was characterised by “the predominance of the idea of person over the idea of nature.”

When the word “person” was used as a technical term only in theological analyses of the Trinity and the Incarnation, it was difficult to formulate the Ecstatic Theory in a discussion of human love, which is why until recently most of the clear presentations of it were to be found in works on the Trinity, from Richard of St Victor’s De Trinitate (12th century) to Théodore de Regnon’s Etudes de théologie

---

347 Thomas Aquinas, In 3 Sent., 28 1 6 c.
348 Denis, De divinis nominibus, c. 4, # 13; PG, 3,712. See above, p. 104.
positive sur le mystère de la Trinité (1892-99). It has come back, though not under that name, in the works of thinkers influenced by person-alm or existentialism.

For holders of the Physical Theory, self-love was a primary datum and love of others was regarded as a secondary phenomenon which was explained by showing how it flowed from self-love. For holders of the Ecstatic Theory, love of others was a primary datum. Many writers of this school were carried away by their own eloquence and emotions at this point and, as I said earlier, said that love is inexplicable and even that it is positively anti-rational and destructive of the lover. 350

About the two theories of love

The Physical Theory explains love of others by showing how it is derived from self-love. Until thinkers discovered that all persons have value in themselves, the Ecstatic Theory did not explain love. The Physical Theory therefore appealed to those who could not accept anything, or even admit the existence of anything, short of the mysteries of religion, which cannot be explained. These authors found the Ecstatic Theory intolerable—Rousselot, for instance, seems not merely to have denied it but to have hated it.

Moreover, thinkers of the scholastic tradition tended to emphasise being or objective reality, or that which is independent of our minds and wills, and to think that nothing is significant unless it is objectively real or at least has a basis in objective reality. These authors defined “person” objectively and not as “who says ‘I’ and to whom ‘Thou’ is said.” Now according to the Physical Theory love has an objectively real basis such as physical parentage or similitude in being, whereas according to the Ecstatic Theory it has none. Naturally, they plunged for the Physical Theory.

Third, holders of the Physical Theory work with parent-child love in mind: for them it is the primary form of love and they assume that what they say about it is valid for love in general. Holders of the Ecstatic Theory, on the other hand, usually work with sexual love or

350 See above, p. 107.
friendship in mind. Rousselot, who held the Physical Theory, noticed this and said:

The very worst way to go about making a metaphysics of love is to look at the question from the viewpoint of egalitarian friendship. This exists *per accidens*, if indeed it can exist at all.  

He went so far as to say: “One ought to say that perfectly egalitarian friendship is undesirable, not possible, does not exist.”

Finally, holders of the Ecstatic Theory fairly consistently misunderstand the Physical Theory. De Regnon, for instance says:

By this love for oneself one can, it is true, love someone else. But then one loves him with reference to oneself; one loves him in so far as he is useful or enjoyable to oneself.

As I have repeatedly said, to say that love of others is derived from self-love does not mean this at all. On the other hand, when Rousselot summarised the Ecstatic Theory of love he included violence and irrationality among its essential elements and he and other holders of the Physical Theory rejected the Ecstatic Theory because it seemed to them to be irrational and therefore immoral. With neither side understanding the other’s theory, it is no wonder that the discussion did not lead to agreement.

The thesis of this book

If I am right, each of these theories is valid for one kind of love; neither is true of love in all its forms. The authors of the Physical Theory correctly explained solidarity-love but were wrong in supposing that their explanation fitted sexual love and friendship. The authors of the Ecstatic tradition described sexual love and friendship well, but their theory does not fit parental, fraternal and similar loves.

---

352 Ibid., p. 29n. Is this not appalling?
26 How universal is all this?

The question must be asked: If what I have said is true, has it always been true, and is it now true, for all human beings?

To answer the question, “Has it always been true?,” we have to consider the evolution of human behaviour, about which a great deal has recently been written. Books have been written specifically about the evolution of love. I will not here go into details about how early human beings behaved in different places and times, and the various stages in human development, but will offer some general observations.

The earliest human beings

In as much as they had immortal souls, the first human beings were radically different from the prehuman primates from which they descended, but it is safe to say that almost all their genes were the same as those of their primate ancestors so that their bodies, including their brains, were almost the same as those of primates. That their brains were almost the same means that they had almost the same instincts and hence almost the same behaviour patterns.

Instinctively, primate mothers cared for their young until these were able to take care of themselves, and the early human mothers did

---

[355] An instinct is an innate, inherited, behavioural tendency, as opposed to one that has been learned by experience or from teaching. If when you are driving a car you suddenly become aware of danger and, without thinking, put your foot down hard on the brake, this is not instinctive but learned behaviour. It may be called “second nature”—“nature” because you act without thinking and “second” because you have learned so to act.
the same, instinctively. The early human fathers probably took some, but not much, interest in their children.356

Also instinctively, they lived in groups, as primates did and do. Each young human being, then, was from birth a member of a particular group, cared for by the group as a child and later participating in the group’s various activities. The men hunted together, co-operating with one another as they pursued various animals, and the women did their work.

Among the men there was a dominance-hierarchy. One man, an alpha male, acted as the leader and the others, who were ranked in order below him, recognised his primacy. There was usually peace as each man deferred to men above him and was deferred to by men below him, but when a man sensed that he was now stronger than someone above him he attacked him, provoking a fight, which was not to the death but ended when one or the other made a sign which meant “You win” and the old order was either reversed or maintained.

While there was conflict within each group, the basic attitude of group members to each other was friendly. Their basic attitude towards human beings of other groups, however, was hostility, and serious fights were common at the borders between the territories of different groups.

Friendship, as distinct from comradeship within each group, was probably nonexistent. Sexual behaviour was not random but conformed to certain patterns: the alpha males often had several women, whom they kept for themselves, and an oldish leading man might take a young woman, or several women, for his own use, which of course meant that the lowest-ranking men did not have any women.357 The unions were not as a rule permanent, and it has been said that they usually lasted around four years, which was the time it took for a human infant to become self-reliant; after that, a drive to separate appeared.358

356 See above, p. 52.
357 Jesus’ statement that “from the beginning” there was monogamy (Matt 19:8) was not about prehistoric human beings.
Evolution of behaviour

In non-human living beings, evolution proceeded by physical changes in the organisms. Human beings have not changed very much physically since we first appeared, but we evolved by making tools, from knives and spears to the wheel and beyond; by making fire, water, wind and animals work for us; and by changes in behaviour and social arrangements. Each generation inherited the tools of the previous generation and was quickly taught how to make and use them; it became more skilful in their use, improved on them and invented new ones. Also, each generation taught its young what it knew and they went on to learn more, so that as time went on human beings knew more and more. The sounds and signs by which they communicated became more and more complex and at a certain stage conceptual language appeared and became more and more highly developed. Also, human beings began to count and measure things accurately, and to think (as we would say) scientifically. Later, writing, of which there have been and are various forms, appeared; still later, printing and now photocopying and the computer were invented.

At some stage in the course of evolution, the sexual arrangements changed, permanent pair union became the norm and human fatherhood become important. Also, at some stage human beings began to make value-judgements and they discovered morality. They then became capable of morally good and bad behaviour, in all areas of life including the sexual.

Closer to our own time, a certain pattern of behaviour has become widely accepted, in the sense that even where the behaviour of many people does not conform to it, it is generally believed that this is how human beings ought to behave. It is believed that we ought to be conscious of our fellowship or solidarity with human beings beyond our own group or region, or regardless of appearance and beliefs; that is, racism and extreme nationalism are now regarded as morally wrong. It is also believed that women are equal to men in dignity and are the equals of their spouses; and that friendship is of value.
Civilisation and instincts

As this evolution took place, many instincts that had been inherited from prehuman beings continued to be useful and so did not disappear from human brains but were passed on by inheritance. They still exist. For instance, mothers have an instinctive tendency to cuddle their infants and, seeing that this is a good thing to do, they happily let themselves go. Other instincts seem to have originated in the human species: the “negative imprinting” of brothers and sisters is one example and it seems that at a certain age children instinctively want to wear clothes. Of course, society approves of this instinctive behaviour and its influence is added to that of instinct: here nurture reinforces nature.

On the other hand, we still have some instincts, older than humanity, which cause us to tend to behave in ways that do not fit human behaviour patterns or cultures, especially relatively recent ones. Some families are self-centred; many people cruelly reject human beings who look strange to them, whether these are abnormal members of their own groups or people from other groups; alpha males feel a need to have mistresses as well as wives; marriages break up after four years; men leave their wives or have affairs when they are around fifty and their wives are no longer young, or they find themselves drawn to a kind of infidelity of the eyes and imagination. To a considerable extent, becoming a cultured person consists in learning to resist instinctive impulses and causing this resistance to become “second nature” to us. Here nurture dominates nature.

359 I here dissociate myself from an intellectual left which absolutely denies the existence of instincts in human beings, and maintains that whatever tendencies we have are the result of experience and social conditioning.
360 All instincts are stronger in some beings than in others, and in mothers the maternal instinct ranges from very strong to rather weak.
361 See above, p. 146.
362 See above, p. 95.
363 Fisher looked at the demographic yearbooks of the United Nations and found that in sixty-two cultures, divorce most frequently occurs around the fourth year of marriage (Anatomy of Love, pp. 109-110).
26–How universal is all this?

Other cultures and subcultures

There are other countries in the world at the present time which differ from ours, not only in their practices but also in their theories or their ideals. In some countries, love of all human beings is not regarded as good: instead, tribalism, with hostility towards visibly different human beings, is promoted, and when this is exercised with modern weapons the results are horrible to us. Also, in some countries it is regarded as normal for rich people to buy slaves (often imported from what are believed to be inferior other countries), who have absolutely no rights and who are treated more or less as farmers treat their workhorses. In some countries rich and powerful men—the alpha males—have harems of women who belong exclusively to them and who are in no sense their equals. Finally, in some countries boys and girls are married at an early age, their marriages being arranged by their parents, and this arrangement is justified as follows: when human beings reach puberty they experience sexual desire which means that nature is telling us that they should have sexual intercourse then; because sexual intercourse sometimes leads to pregnancy, this means that they should be married; but at that age they are incapable of making good choices of their spouses, therefore their parents should choose for them. According to the evolutionary view which I have been proposing, these cultures, like cultures which do not have a written language, are not as advanced as ours.

There are also groups of people in our countries, in which the kinds of instinctive behaviour which I mentioned above, which are in disaccord with our culture, are approved of and taught to children. For instance, in some groups the extended family is the only centre of value and loyalty, and people are taught to devote themselves to the

---

364 According to Fisher, of 853 cultures on record, 84% permit (I will use the present tense) polygamy, which in almost all cases means that men may have several wives (only 0.5% of societies permit women to have more than one husband). In the vast majority of these societies, however, only 5% to 10% of men have several wives simultaneously. (If these men have an average of three wives each, presumably 10 to 20% of men miss out.) This means that 70% to 85% of the men in these societies live in couples: “Pair-bonding is a trademark of the human animal.” (Anatomy of Love, pp. 66, 69, 72).
family, to the exclusion of all others and often at the expense of others. In some groups, racism is an integral part of the culture, or subculture. In other groups it is regarded as a man’s right to be promiscuous and men boast of—and are admired by both men and women for—the number of women they have had sex with. These groups are culturally undeveloped or have subcultures which are more primitive than the main culture of their countries.

Children sometimes have a separate and undeveloped subculture. If in a large school small boys are allowed to run free in a playground, fights break out all over the place after which there is an accepted rank-order and the boys are divided into groups or gangs, each of which has an alpha boy as its leader. Any child who looks different from any of the others—an Asian child in an otherwise European school, for example, or an unusually fat child—is mercilessly taunted and may be physically attacked. Boys regard girls as inferior beings and they themselves are intensely competitive, which teachers sometimes exploit to make them study or do jobs. In all this, one can see primitive instincts, inherited from our prehuman ancestors, at work before they are tamed by a civilised upbringing.

Value judgements on cultures

I said above that at a certain stage in human cultural evolution value-judgements began to be made, and our distant ancestors became moral beings. Value-judgements, we may be sure, were made within the culture of the place and time, and morality was similarly cultural. The question arises: are all value-judgements and is all morality intra-cultural?

---

365 In a newspaper of 10 July 1996 the mother of the actors Edward and James Fox, who is herself the illegitimate daughter of Frederick Lonsdale, is quoted as having said: “I never expect a man to be faithful, not if he’s a real man. It’s perfectly natural for a man to have mistresses.”
Cultural relativism

Cultural relativism is the belief that all value-judgements are purely cultural, so that they can be made only within particular cultures. This implies that it is impossible to situate oneself outside all cultures and, as it were looking down on them all, judge that this or that culture is good or bad, or good in some respects and bad in others, or that this or that culture is better than some other culture. This means that while it may be possible to say that, as a matter of fact, all human beings were nomadic hunter-gatherers until some began to sow plants and to have herds of animals, it should not be said that the culture or way of life which has developed since then is better than the earlier nomadic culture. It also implies that there are no universal “human rights,” which every country, whatever its culture, should recognise, and that if some women are harassed in our society, in which such behaviour is not approved, feminists are right to spring to their defence, but they should not object to the ways in which women are treated in some other countries, where they have virtually no rights. It implies that while we can condemn slavery, torture or female circumcision if they occur in our own countries, we cannot object to them when they happen elsewhere. It implies that it was wrong of people outside the American south to condemn the segregation which was a part of its culture, it was wrong of people outside South Africa to condemn apartheid, and it is wrong to condemn anti-semitism, even that of Nazi Germany, if it is part of a country’s dominant culture. Moreover, we cannot condemn anything in our society which is generally accepted in it, nor our own society in so far as it accepts it.

Cultural relativism even implies that whether love (in any form) is good or bad is a purely cultural judgement, and a few cultural relativists actually say this. “As a social anthropologist,” says Sidney M. Greenfield, “I have no way of determining whether love is good or bad outside the belief system shared by the members of a society,” and Lawrence Casler says:

To state that love is, somehow, intrinsically a superior emotion is to express a current cultural bias. Nothing is good or bad but culture makes it so.\textsuperscript{367}

(Casler is not consistent, since he concludes his contribution to *Symposium on Love* by saying: “The only answer to the question, ‘Love: who needs it’ is this: most people in our society need love but the situation may be improving.”\textsuperscript{368} “Improving” expresses a value-judgement from outside our society.)

This is surely impossible to sustain with conviction, and I venture to say that not all is relative and that a great value-judgement can be made about cultural evolution, which is that in general it has been the emergence of better patterns of behaviour from patterns which were less good. I will certainly say, without any doubt in my mind, that in all times and places love is good.

### A natural-law theory based on primitive nature

The Social Darwinists looked at prehuman and early-human evolution, all of which was pre-moral, and saw that nature worked there by random variation, competition and the survival of the fittest. They then maintained that we should work in this way now: society should allow free competition, the fittest human beings will then prosper and have many children while the relatively unfit will not make a living and they should be allowed to die or in some other way be prevented from reproducing. Richard Dawkins, in *The Selfish Gene*, maintains that the unit of evolution was and is the gene, so that everyone’s behaviour is, or should be, aimed at maximising the passing-on of his or her genes. B. F. Skinner maintained in effect that the survival of a culture is the master value that should guide all human activity. In all these theories, particular cultures can be judged as more or less good depending on to what extent they permit or obstruct the working of nature.

This obviously seems inhumane, and in a way it is meant to, since it involves imposing on human society the behaviour patterns of animals in the wild. It amounts to saying that because, as I said above,

\textsuperscript{367} Casler, “Towards a Re-Evaluation of Love,” ibid., p. 8. \textsuperscript{368} Ibid., p. 37.
How universal is all this?

nature is not a welfare state, therefore there should be no universal health insurance. Also, its proponents generally either deny the possibility of altruism or strongly disapprove of it.\textsuperscript{369} The trouble with this theory is that with human beings something quite different entered the world, and by their own inner dynamic human beings developed a culture or way of life which is different from that of animals in the wild and which involves respect for all persons, spiritual values, and love.

A natural-law theory based on rational human nature

Catholics and others developed a value-theory and an ethics according to which human behaviour is good if is in accord with rational human nature, and bad if it is disaccord with it. To select matters that concern us here, they maintained that it is wrong to attack another human being and that sexual activity is morally good only within permanent monogamous marriage. They thus had a supra-cultural master-value and norm of morality, by reference to which they could judge whole cultures, including their own.

I see two problems here. One is that most of the thinkers who proposed this theory in the past had no concept of human cultural evolution and assumed that men and women had always been rational, moral beings, with families and social lives more or less like their own. It seems to me, however, that when the earliest human beings fought one another to establish dominance, as stags and other animals do, they were behaving naturally, and when the alpha males had many “wives,” this was natural, too. Such behaviour did not suddenly become unnatural or immoral when the first human soul was created. Looking down on early men and women, God approved of their behaviour, as he approves of similar behaviour of primates in the wild now, and as he does not approve of immoral behaviour, even when the person does not know that what he or she is doing is immoral; and as we read of their behaviour we should not be roused to moral indignation by it.

The other problem is that in practice, when it came to details, the natural-law authors whose ideas I am discussing here were beings of

\textsuperscript{369} See above, pp. 104-105.
their culture. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries they con-
demned cruelty to slaves and sexual abuse of slave women but they did
not think that slavery, which was accepted by the culture of that time,
was immoral. To at least some of them, democracy seemed unnatu-
ral and wrong. Many of them said that two beings are united only when
they are to one another as act and potency, or dominant and
submissive, and they deduced from this law of being that husbands are
necessarily the masters of their wives. Their morality was not as supra-
cultural as they thought it was.

An evolutionary theory

I agree with the cultural relativists that value-judgements and morality
are cultural, and that every culture has its own ideas about values and
morality. I disagree with them, however, when they say that value and
moral judgements can be made only within a particular culture, and
only for that culture, so that when we study another country or time,
with a culture that is different from ours, we should put our own values
and morality out of our minds, assume that the other culture is right
for the people who have it, and make no value-comparisons. I believe
that cultural evolution, and in particular the evolution of love, has
been a genuine progress, so that it is right to talk of higher cultures and
of their superiority—not merely technological but spiritual and
moral—to primitive cultures. It is also right of us to condemn such
things as slavery, and the treatment of Australian aboriginals in the
nineteenth century, as evils, though this was not perceived at that time,
so that we are condemning whole cultures. Moreover, it is right of us
to say that certain countries, where women are extremely unequal to
men, are behind us in their cultural, including moral, development.
Finally, while we should accept as binding on ourselves the moral code
of our cultures, so far as we agree with it, we may at times judge that
something which is generally believed in our communities is in fact
false, and set out to convince others of this: this is what the aboli-
tionists did with regard to slavery, it is what civil rights activists did with
regard to racial segregation and unequal treatment, and it is what
feminists have done and are still doing with regard to the dignity and
rights of women.
Part 6

Theological Implications
The Trinity and the idea of God

In Western Europe in the eighteenth century many of the intellectual elite found that they did not believe the religion, Catholic or Protestant, of their country, but they did not all become atheists. Instead, many of them came to believe that the universe is controlled by an unpersonal entity which some of them thought was well symbolised by a pair of dividers and a setsquare. If computers had existed then I am sure that they would have said the universe is controlled by a spiritual computer, which has a program. The belief in such a being is called deism as distinct from theism, which is belief in a personal God, and the deists attributed to their ultimate principle the benevolence which Christians attributed to their God, so that when they said, “In God we trust,” they meant that they had confidence in the infinite computer’s program. In circles where this belief prevailed, belief in a personal God was regarded as sentimental and out of date. Similar ideas of God are being offered now by mathematicians and theoretical physicists who are not Christians and have speculated about ultimate reality.

Some devotees of Eastern religions talk of mystical experiences in which a human being rises above the world of the senses and mentally ascends to a higher spiritual realm, in which he or she achieves union with something that is variously called the Ground of Being, the One, the Absolute, or the divinity. There is a certain similarity between their belief and that of the deists, but Eastern religions are usually poetic and non-rational, whereas the deists were and are highly rational.
In books about mysticism, some writers say that while before embarking on a mystical journey a Christian may contemplate the events of Christ’s life and death and be moved by them, in mystical experience he or she rises above the material world, in which these events were situated, and ascends to a purely spiritual world. According to Heiler, for instance, in Christian mysticism “the historical salvific events, the incarnation of God and his atoning passion, fade away to become transparent symbols of supertemporal truths.” Admittedly, he says, the mystic contemplates certain events of Jesus’ life, “but it is always a question of ascending from the historical Jesus to the supertemporal Logos.”370 If at this stage the mystic is conscious of the three divine persons, he or she may now ascend even further, to union with an unpersonal One. According to Aldous Huxley, Ruysbroeck said that in the reality intuitively known by the mystic “we can speak no more of Father, Son and Holy Spirit,”371 and Evelyn Underhill says that “an intuition of simple and undifferentiated Godhead—the Unity—beyond those three centres of Divine Consciousness which we call the Trinity of Persons, is highly characteristic of mysticism.”372 When this theory of Christian mysticism is accepted, a similarity is often affirmed between it and Eastern mysticism and Aldous Huxley deduced from this that the inmost essence of Christianity and Eastern religions is the same “perennial philosophy.”

The neo-scholastic theologians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries did not deny the doctrine of the Trinity but, as I have said elsewhere, for at least three reasons they found the doctrine intellectually embarrassing. First, they believed that being is the ultimate reality, and God is one being, not three. Second, they maintained that unity is a perfection and implicitly regarded multiplicity, which starts with two, as imperfection; hence they were far more at home with the idea of one God than with that of three persons. Third, they tended to think that it is out of weakness that some beings reach towards others and want their company, so that in principle a solitary life is on a higher plane than a life in community. Influenced by Aristotle, they

370 Heiler, *Das Gebet*, p. 221.
371 Quoted by Aldous Huxley in *The Perennial Philosophy*, chap. 2, p. 40. Ruysbroeck was a late-medieval Rhineland mystical writer.
conceived God as a completely self-sufficient being and the Trinity of persons did not fit well into this. They therefore played the doctrine down and preferred to talk most of the time about “God,” a term that for them meant the three persons taken together.

Most Christians, however, and (as we will see) the orthodox Christian mystics believed and believe that while there is one God there are three divine persons. This is one of the “principal mysteries” of our faith. In our creeds we affirm our belief in the Trinity, we baptise people in the name of the three divine persons, and at the beginning and end of all our liturgical actions we say “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” making the sign of the cross as we say these words. Moreover, when we grasp that solidarity love is not a weakness and in ecstatic love strong, not weak, persons reach towards other strong persons, giving their love and accepting the love of others; when we understand that strong persons want to live with others whom they love and by whom they are loved, whereas weak persons shrink from deep communication with others and especially with their equals; when we understand that personal life at its highest is interpersonal; and when these ideas have been admitted into the ensemble of beliefs which mean most to us: then far from being intellectually embarrassed by the doctrine of the Trinity and wanting to play it down, we accept it with delight because it seems absolutely right to us to say that the divine life is not only personal but interpersonal and that there are three divine persons, each of whom has the company of the others.

The two processions

It was agreed at an early stage that the second person “proceeds from” the first person so that they are God the Father and God the Son, and the third person, the Holy Spirit, proceeds from the first two. Understandably, Christians eventually felt a need to explain this using human experience, and Augustine, who had been a professional philosopher before in his early thirties he became a Christian, decided that the two processions are analogous to human intellection and volition respectively: in an intellectual act, he said, the first person “generates” the second, who is called the Word or the Son, and in a
volitional act of love the first two persons “spirate” the third person, the Holy Spirit.

In the seven or eight centuries which followed there was little original speculation, but in the twelfth century this began again. Augustine’s theory of an intellectual first procession and a volitional second procession was assumed by all, but before long there were two quite different theories of the spiration of the Holy Spirit. They were connected to the two medieval theories of love, the Physical and Ecstatic Theories, which I discussed above.373

Anselm (1033-1109), who re-started speculation about the Trinity, held the Physical Theory and maintained that self-love is the primary love and that the love which is involved in the spiration of the Holy Spirit is the self-love of the divine being. He was followed by Peter Lombard (1100-1160) and, in his later works, by Thomas Aquinas, who said: “The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son by way of the love by which God loves himself.”374 As I will say in a moment, some authors maintained that the Holy Spirit springs from the mutual love of the first two persons for each other. Duns Scotus, a late scholastic thinker, rejected this, saying:

> The Father does not spirate the Holy Spirit inasmuch as he loves the Son, nor the Son inasmuch as he loves the Father; but rather, the Father and the Son spirate the Holy Spirit inasmuch as they have the divine essence as the first object of their will.375

A few hundred years later there was a second age of scholasticism and in it Suarez (1548-1617) said: “I assert first of all that the production of love or the Holy Spirit does not essentially need a plurality of persons.”376 In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there was a third age of scholasticism and in 1923 Josef Slipyj wrote an important article setting out the two positions. He opted for this one, which was commonly taught in Catholic schools of theology,377 and

---

373 See above, pp. 229-233.
374 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 4,23. In early works Thomas proposed the Ecstatic view: see below.
375 Duns Scotus, *Opus Oxon.*, l. 1, d. 12, q. 1.
376 Suarez, *De Trinitate*, book 19, chap. 6, # 5; *Opera*, 1,769b.
377 Slipyj became the Metropolitan of the Ukranian Catholics. In 1945-46 the NKGB removed the entire hierarchy of the Ukranian Catholic Church and
writing on the Trinity in the nineteen-forties Lonergan said: “The proper object of divine love is the divine goodness which is identical with God.” Around 1966 Rahner said: “There is properly no mutual love between Father and Son.”

Richard of St Victor (+ 1173), on the other hand, held the Ecstatic Theory and said that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the love of the Father and the Son for each other as distinct persons. He was followed in this by William of Auxerre (+ 1231), William of Auvergne (+ 1249) and others. The medieval Franciscan school took this route: for instance, Bonaventure said: “The love that is the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Father as he loves himself, nor from the Son as he loves himself: it proceeds from the Father and the Son as they love each other.” Albert the Great (a Dominican, 1193-1280) said that the love of the Father and the Son “proceeds from them not by virtue of the fact that they are one in essence but as distinct from each other.”

Early in his career Thomas Aquinas said: “The Holy Spirit, who proceeds by way of the will as love, necessarily proceeds from two mutually loving each other.” In the eighteen-nineties Théodore de Regnon revived the Victorine theory in some beautiful pages in which, ahead of his time, he talked of the love of “I” for “Thou,” said that in personal love one person loves another precisely as other and that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the mutual love of the first two divine persons for each other as persons. More recently, David Coffey has expounded the Victorine theory.

arrested 800 priests; Slipyj was taken to a labour camp in Siberia. The Orthodox Church took over the property and other assets of this church, which went underground. Early in 1963, at the time of a Vatican-Soviet detente, Slipyj was allowed to leave Russia and he went to Rome, where he died in 1984.

380 Bonaventure, *Sent. 1*, d. 13, a. 1, q. 1.
381 Albert the Great, *In 1 Sent.*, d. 10, a. 2, ad 5.
382 Thomas Aquinas, *In 1 Sent.*, 10 1 3; *De Potentia*, 9 9 ad 3. Thomas seems later to have switched to the Anselmian theory (see above).
My theory

It seems to me that the distinction between solidarity love and ecstatic love which I have proposed in this book can be the basis of a theory of the two processions in the Trinity. According to it the first procession is, like the generation of a child by a human parent, an expression of God’s self-love, which springs from self-knowledge and is not in any way selfish. Consequent on this procession there are two persons, who know and love each other as persons or (to quote Albert the Great, “not by virtue of the fact that they are one in essence but as distinct from each other”), and they express their mutual love by “spirating” the third person.

Arguments for my theory

In us, intellect and will are so closely connected that they do not have entirely separate activities. Because any activity proceeds from a volitional tendency, intellection, which is an activity, must proceed from a volitional tendency;\textsuperscript{385} and what are called elicited volitions are made in words, which are intellectual. Even if one accepts the distinction between human intellection and volition, by all the rules of theology we distinguish between the divine intellection and volition only because they are distinct \textit{in us} and we know there is no real distinction between them in God; but the two processions have to be distinct from each other in God.

At least implicitly, Anselmians exclude love from the first procession but it is surely wrong to exclude love from the generation of the Son by the Father, leaving a singularly arctic paternity.

Anselmians say that the object of the \textit{will} is being and that therefore the divine persons love the divine being, not each other as persons. But the object of the \textit{intellect} is also being, so that if the principle implies that the divine persons do not \textit{love} each other as persons it also implies they do not \textit{know} each other as persons, either, which is absurd. It is therefore more reasonable to say that the argument is invalid and that the divine persons both know and love each other as persons.

\textsuperscript{385} This was called by the scholastics the \textit{voluntas ut natura}. 
Objections to the Victorine theory

The principal objection which was made against the Victorine theory was that while we talk in the singular about a mutual love, or the love of two persons for each other, in reality there are two loves, one in each person. *Si mutuus non unicus*, said the scholastics, or “A mutual love is two loves, not one.” A mutual love of the first two persons in the Trinity would, then, be a love of the Father for the Son and a distinct love of the Son for the Father, which, it was said, is impossible because there cannot be two acts of love in God - Rahner says: “There is properly no *mutual* love between Father and Son, for this would presuppose two acts.” Moreover, it is said, if the Holy Spirit were a mutual love there would be two Holy Spirits, which of course is not the case. In reply to this I would say that if there are two processions, as there certainly are, I do not see why there cannot be two loves, and if there are two persons, distinct from each other, it seems to me strange to say that neither can love the other as a person distinct from himself. It is true that a mutual love is two loves; however, the Holy Spirit is not precisely the mutual love of the Father and the Son but, rather, the expression of it, so that while there are two loves there is only one Holy Spirit.

My theory has another problem. I have said that ecstatic love is free and so might seem to have implied that the first two persons are free to have ecstatic love for each other or not, and hence that the Holy Spirit is contingent. I said, however, that it would be wrong for a person to choose not to have ecstatic love for any other person—it would be wrong for an I to choose lonely Thoulessness. Since, then, after the first procession there are two and only two persons, they necessarily love each other as persons.

---

386 Rahner, *The Trinity*, p. 106. I quoted part of this sentence above.
387 Above, p. 160.
2 Nature and grace: the two initiatives

Catholic theologians see two distinct actions of God towards human beings: they are called creation and elevation and are the basis of a distinction between nature and grace. When all love is explained in the terms of the Physical Theory, there is thought to be only one kind of love and the distinction between nature and grace is explained in terms of less and more: it is said that in creation God gives us a share in his nature and loves us because of what we have in common with him, and in grace he gives us a greater share in his nature and so loves us more. I want to maintain here that the two loves are a better basis for this distinction, as they are for the two processions.

First, moved by self-love God “emits” goodness or causes beings other than himself to exist, and when these beings exist he loves them as beings, with solidarity-love. Since God must love beings which he has created, this love does not involve a separate choice.

Once we are in existence, we are persons who as such are to the divine persons existing other persons and now they have a second choice. They can reveal themselves personally to us and offer to establish relationships of ecstatic love with us; and this is what they have done, so that the love which belongs to the order of grace should be understood by analogy with human ecstatic love, not solidarity-love.

According to this theory, intellect and will are active in both actions, as they are in both processions. I will discuss each in turn, then love between human beings.

3 Creation

The motive of creation

Scholastic theologians maintained that if any being other than God himself were to move God to act, it would be prior to him in a series of causes; this, they said, is impossible because God is the absolutely first cause; therefore, they concluded, God cannot be moved to act by
any being, or the idea of any being, other than himself. Hence, they said, God does not create human or other beings for their sakes but for himself. Lenaert Leys SJ (1554-1623), who is better known as Lessius, interpreted this to mean that God always acts for his own benefit and went on:

But there is no imaginable benefit which God can acquire except external glory [the praise of other beings], which by the way is the most splendid of external benefits. Therefore it is impossible for God to will or do anything except in order to acquire glory.388

These shocking words represent the victory of metaphysics over Christianity and the analysis of parental love which I have outlined enables us to correct them. While God is moved by his self-love to create other beings, he creates us purely in order to “emit” being, not to “acquire glory” or anything else. Since he is wholly perfect, he is the ultimate and altruistic source of all being other than himself.

Some authors say that God created us, the people who exist, out of love for us. Ernesto Cardenal writes eloquently about this:

From all eternity he chose us from among an infinite number of possible beings. He chose us, not those other possible beings and so they did not exist.

Addressing the individual reader, he goes on to say: “The very fact that you exist is the greatest proof of God’s preference for you.”389 This supposes that possible human beings have identities and that God picks and chooses between them. This, however, is not the case: to have an identity one must actually exist, so that prior to our existence there were and are no particular other people to whom we have been preferred. There is no me or you or us, and no them, either.

Others authors talk of God giving us the gift of life, but we saw earlier that giving presupposes the existence of a recipient, so that parents do not, strictly speaking, give life to their children.390 Similarly, because until we began to exist there were no “we” to whom

388 Lessius, De perfectionibus divinis, book 14, chap. 3.
389 Cardenal, Love, p. 40. Cardenal was a poet rather than a theologian.
390 See above, p. 54.
existence could be given, and once we began to exist it could not be
given to us because we already had it, God did not, strictly speaking,
give existence to us. He generously decided to bring other beings into
existence, and here we are.

I said earlier that when people have children they are obliged to
provide them with what they need for life and growth, so that these
things are not gifts. As we need the air we breathe and the rest of the
material universe, it is not, therefore, a gift from God to us. This may
seem shocking but, first, it means that God made a single decision to
create us and to provide us with all we need for our natural human life;
second, it throws into relief the things which God has, in the most
strict sense of the word, given to us.

God’s love for us as beings

God’s love for us and our love for him have traditionally been
understood as analogous to the love between human parents and their
children, which is solidarity-love. It is along these lines that Thomas
Aquinas explains God’s love for us:

Just as God, knowing his own essence, knows all the beings which
spring from him insofar as they are likenesses of his own truth, so
also in willing his own essence he wills all the beings which spring
from him in so far as they are likenesses of his own goodness,
or in loving himself he loves us in so far as we resemble him.

It is true that we have limitations and weaknesses. Good and
generous parents have no difficulty in accepting their children’s
natural limitations, especially when they are small, and the children of
a great statesman or scholar are not overcome with awe in his presence
or ashamed of their littleness. Moreover, if children have defects such
as lameness, good parents wholly accept these. The analogy thus
implies that God completely accepts our natural limitations and each
human being’s particular defects. It is therefore wrong to go on and
on about how little we are in his sight, and how awed we should feel.

391 See above, p. 48.
392 Thomas Aquinas, In 1 Sent., 45 1 2 c. This includes the theory of creation which
I stated above.
We should feel at home or comfortable with God, as children feel comfortable with their parents however small they are and however illustrious their parents are.

Is God’s love unequal? In *Foundations of Thomistic Philosophy* (1927), Sertillanges said that some beings have greater likeness than others to the divine goodness; “these differences,” he said, “allow the creative love to be qualified and graduated” and that “He loves them unequally.” Good parents do not “graduate” their love according to their children’s perfection but love all, the gifted and the less well endowed, equally, and I for one feel sure that God does the same.

**Communication**

I said earlier that solidarity-love does not need deep personal communication, and that offspring do not have a right to this from their parents, who as a rule do not tell them about financial, sexual or other problems which weigh heavily on themselves. And so we find that creation does not involve revelation, about which I will talk later, with personal communication from and to the divine persons. Great thinkers, including scientists, who either have never heard of Christianity or have not understood and accepted it, have without revelation arrived at the conclusion that an infinite being exists, who or which is the Ground of Being. This is the basis of forms of mysticism which exist outside Christianity. Without revelation, that is where we would all be. It would be impossible for us to establish communication with this being by science, philosophy, asceticism or ritual. We would, in our highest moments, be listening in the silence for a word from this being, a revelation, but we would be unable to make him speak to us.

In some forms of mysticism, union with God is said to involve complete loss of self. The soul merges into the One like a faint ray of light, which was visible in a half-dark house, becoming invisible when it goes out a window into bright sunlight. Heiler says that mysticism is “that form of intercourse with God in which the world and self are absolutely denied, in which human personality is dissolved, disappears and is absorbed in the infinite unity of the Godhead.”

---

394 See above, p. 84.
however, is surely perverse and cannot be a feature of “natural mysticism.”

This is all very well, but at the human level there normally needs to be a great deal of communication between parents and children—babies and infant children need to be held and played with and talked to, and older children need their parents to show an interest in what they are doing. In fact, the divine persons have opened up communication with us, but the question is: is not this necessary, so that revelation is not a gratuitous gift but something which is integral to creation?

Our self-love

In a famous book about love, Anders Nygren, who was a Lutheran, said in 1930 that “Christianity does not recognise self-love as a legitimate form of love.” Christian love, he said, “in self-love finds its chief adversary, which must be fought and conquered.” He was not condemning merely low forms of self-love, “but all self-love whatsoever, even in its most highly spiritual forms.” In the final paragraph of the book he said: “So far from self-love being a natural ordinance of God in nature, it is a devilish perversion.” Ernesto Cardenal, a Catholic, has more recently (1970) said:

God is love but our self-love is anti-love for love is self-surrender and self-love is giving way to self or not giving oneself to another. Self-love is the opposite of love. It is love turned inwards, it is hate.

People who say that self-love is vicious commonly say that Jesus, who was perfect, loved himself not at all and was entirely “the man for others.”

395 Heiler, Prayer, p. 136.
397 Ibid., p. 131.
398 Ibid., p. 740. He uses the same phrase on p. 723.
399 Cardenal, Love, p. 44.
Augustine, it seems, constructed an “order of charity”: “First love God, then yourself, then your neighbour as yourself,”400 he said, and it was taken to mean: “Love God, love yourself less than God and your neighbour less than yourself.” Influenced by Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas said that self-love is not only good but of primary importance. I said earlier than Erich Fromm’s ideas about the value of self-love reached people involved in education and the upbringing of children. It also reached Christian spiritual writers and, through them, preachers and counsellors, so that now no up-to-date Christian of any church is likely to regard self-love as vicious. He or she is far more likely to talk at length about the absolute necessity of a “positive self-image” and “self-acceptance” or self-love. Moreover, if God loves us because we are like him and have goodness or value, in having self-love we are at one with God and what I said earlier about self-love can stand.

Our love of God

Thomas Aquinas said:

To love God above all things is something connatural to humans, and even to any creature, not only rational but also irrational, and even inanimate, in accordance with the manner of love that best suits each creature.401

This was a widespread belief in the Middle Ages and in the neoscholastic period. If we put irrational creatures aside, we can see that, as Rahner, Küng and others have said, we make a basic choice about being: we decide to trust it or distrust it, we choose to accept it or refuse it.402 If we accept being, we love it. Implicit in this is love of God, who is the Ground of Being.

The intrinsic value of the natural order

There has been a spiritual tradition which opposes grace to nature, affirming in effect that nature is bad and grace is good so that there is

400 Augustine, Sermon 368, chap. 5, no. 5: PL, 39,1655.
401 ST 1-2 109 3 c, as translated by Alan Vincelette in Rousselot, The Problem of Love in the Middle Ages, p. 95.
402 See above, p. 19.
a conflict between them or that they have what A Kempis called “contrary motions.” As Rousselot says, in sermons, ascetic treatises, letters of direction and books of popular piety like that of A Kempis, grace involved charity (so far, so good) and nature involved sheer selfishness and lust.403 If Catholics of an old school of spirituality heard it said that it is natural for children to grow up in their families, they thought that the speaker was arguing for boarding schools; similarly, if you told them that it is natural for unmarried girls and boys to enjoy each others’ company they thought you were affirming the need to keep them apart. Ignatius Loyola dissociated himself from this when he said that “all the other things on the face of the earth” were created to help human beings to praise, reverence and serve God and so to save their souls. Contemporary Catholics have gone much further and come to the belief, which was stated by Vatican II, that the things which make up what it called the temporal order “not only aid in the attainment of man’s ultimate goal but also possess their own intrinsic value.”404

The word “temporal” is equivalent to “secular” as opposed to “specifically religious” and the council’s teaching is that secular realities like truth, justice and beauty have value in themselves, that life at the natural level is not absurd and that unbelievers, who understand life at that level only, can have meaningful lives. It means that truth is to be found not only in the bible but in philosophy and science. It also means that there is such a thing as secular morality and we have no right to assume that people who have no religion have no morality, properly so called, and are guided only by practical considerations: if we have discussions with them about rights and crimes against humanity we can, without inconsistency, argue on moral grounds. Also, in discussions among ourselves about difficult moral problems we often work at a secular level. Moreover, whereas political systems used to be bound up with religions, so that to deny the religion was regarded as treason, we now accept that states can, even should, be secular. We do not maintain that the punishment of wrongdoers


404 “Omnia quae efficiunt ordinem temporalem … non solum subsidia sunt ad finem ultimum hominis, sed et *proprium habent valorem.*” *Vatican II, Apostolicam Actuositatem*, # 7. My emphasis.
should be left to the divine persons; instead, we regard criminal justice as a secular matter, the business of the secular state.

In certain texts it may appear that Jesus said that the family, a natural reality if ever there was one, has no place in the kingdom, that is, in the order of grace. If you give a dinner, he said, do not invite your relatives to it: invite needy strangers (see Luke 14:12-13). He went so far as to say: “If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26). Also, when he was told that his mother and brothers were outside, asking for him and perhaps expecting to be made his inner circle, with precedence over James, John and the others, “he replied, ‘Who are my mother and my brothers?’ and looking around on those who sat about him, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother’” (Mark 3:33-34), in effect declaring that blood ties meant nothing to him. Christians today emphasise the family so strongly that many of us have not noticed that Jesus was almost entirely negative on the subject. It seems to me that in the Galilee of Jesus’ time the accepted folk-wisdom probably was that blood is thicker than water so that selfish families were the rule,\textsuperscript{405} that he fought against this, and that unselfish families are both natural and good.

The problems of suffering and evil

One feature of the natural universe is development. Individual living beings have life-cycles: they begin small, they grow, they flourish for a while, then they decline and at last they die. Also, the material universe as a whole develops, as is shown most of all in evolution and is now being shown in the spread of civilisation.

What is perhaps less clear is that the material universe involves randomness or chance, as can be observed in human reproduction, since men and women usually meet by chance and when they have a child it can have any one of millions of different combinations of genes, and which combination it will have is left to chance. Many

\textsuperscript{405} See above, p. 95.
Christians say that everything happens as God wills so that if, for example, a particular man and woman, who have never even heard of each other, happen to attend the same conference, meet there, fall in love and get married, this was providential in the sense of pre-arranged, so that they should thank God for sending them to each other and causing them to fall in love. There is, many Christians say, no such thing as chance and what looks like it is really providence at work. It seems to me more reasonable to think of God as leaving these things to chance, because that is the way things happen in the created universe. If God were the arranger of all meetings and all failures to meet, would so many people never meet a suitable and available partner, and would men and women who are married to other people meet and fall in love? Chance is also, most of the time, a feature of death. Again, many Christians believe that we die at a moment which is chosen by God, but this is simply not credible. Development and chance are features of a material universe and, respecting that, God most of the time lets nature take its course. As chance is sometimes good luck and sometimes bad luck, there is a lot of bad luck in the universe and it is the cause of much suffering, which God does not usually prevent.

When human beings became rational, the development of the human race became a matter which involved thought, and at this point mistakes entered the universe. With all the good will in the world, people made mistakes and they caused suffering.

Immorality is not a necessary feature of the universe but it is a reality in it. Most obviously, it involves unjust hurt of some human beings by others, and it obstructs the spread and development of civilisation. It is also offensive to God, the creator of the universe in which it occurs, who does not, however, stop it or prevent people from being hurt by it.

4 Grace

I said that the natural order has a certain value-autonomy, so that human life at the natural level is not absurd. For this reason, it would
not have been unjust for the divine persons to have left us there. We saw earlier that sometimes parents and their grown-up sons or daughters become friends, as one or the other freely offers friendship and the other accepts it, so that relationships of ecstatic love join persons who are already linked by solidarity-love. As we have also seen, it is impossible for one person, on his or her own, to establish a relationship of ecstatic love with another person: if I want such a relationship with another person, all I can do is offer myself and hope that the other will accept me and love me in return. The divine persons, then, cannot by an exercise of their own will cause ecstatic relationships to exist between themselves and us; they can only reveal themselves to us and offer their love, hoping that we will accept it and love them. They have done this, wanting all men and women without exception to accept their offer.

If we accept this offer we enter upon the supernatural life, or the life of grace. The Thomists, and others who explained all love in terms of the Physical Theory, explained the love involved in the life of grace in terms of parent-child love but, as I said earlier, I believe that it is better understood in terms of what I call ecstatic love.

Revelation and faith

Let me give two cases:

(1) While a couple were out for an evening, a burglar broke a window of their house, let himself in and stole some goods. They reported this to the police and a detective asked a next-door neighbour if he had heard anything. The neighbour replied that at precisely 11 p.m. he heard a sound of breaking glass but, having checked his own house, thought nothing more of it. He knew the exact time, he said, because it was just at the end of the film Titanic, which he had been watching on television. The detective thanked him, fixed the time of the break-in at 11 p.m., and later concluded that the crime could not have been committed by a certain man whom he would otherwise have suspected, because many people saw him at a restaurant at that time.

406 See above, pp. 229-232.
(2) A single man and a single woman had been meeting often and getting to know one another. After a time the woman said: “There is something I think you should know. Starting when I was ten, my father made me pose for nude photographs once a month. He insisted that the purpose was artistic and he showed the photos to all the members, mostly men, of a photography club in Norway to which he belonged and he intended to continue until I was eighteen, then publish the photos showing the development of my body from ten to eighteen. I hated it but my mother, though I could see that she did not like it, took his side. He died when I was sixteen, my mother and I destroyed all his photos and two years later I emigrated, leaving her. I am now pathologically modest and I attribute this to what I now see was a form of sexual abuse.” Moved, the man thanked the woman and decided that, when they met next, he would ask her to marry him.

There is a certain similarity between these two cases, since in each of them a man believes, on another person’s word, something which he has not himself observed, but the experience of the detective in the first example is very different from that of the single man in the second one. In the first case, the detective saw the neighbour only as a source of information. In the second case, the single man’s attention was primarily fixed on the woman who was talking, and he was interested in what she said only because it would help him to understand her. The difference will become apparent if in both cases the listener finds out that he has been lied to. Suppose that in the first case the detective later learns that the screening of Titanic was cancelled at the last moment and another film was substituted. He at once concludes that the neighbour, relying on the published programme, was lying and hence that the break-in may not have occurred at 11 p.m. He promptly reinstates the man in the restaurant as a suspect; but his own personal life is unaffected. Now suppose that in the second case the man learns that the woman’s father died when she was nine. He is dumbfounded, he feels as if his future is like a house that has come crashing down, and he drops the idea of proposing marriage.

Christianity begins with divine revelation, and it is analogous to the second of the two cases above, not the first. In it the divine persons speak to us, revealing above all themselves and our response, which is faith, is not in the first place our believing what they tell us but our
giving of attention to them: it is belief in a person or persons rather than belief that something is the case. This means that if someone is convinced by “natural reason” that God exists, his final state is not Christian faith; indeed, if he were to study various religions and, as an outside observer, judge that what Christians believe is most probably true; his pure “belief that” would not be Christian faith.

This is not to say that Christian faith has nothing to do with any beliefs about God, which are expressed in statements. On the contrary, every “Thou” is also a “He” or “She,” it is impossible to know someone personally without knowing something about him or her, hence a “belief in” God which included no “beliefs that” would not make sense. So Christian faith presupposes the assent to the truth that God exists and speaks to us in Christ and it leads us to assent to many truths which God has revealed to us. In particular, we believe that, as a matter of fact, there are three divine persons who have certain relationships with each other, as I discussed above.

**Solidarity-love in the order of grace**

I said earlier that between human beings parental love is expressed in communication and contact between parents (or other adults) and children, and I remarked that the absence of such contact between the divine persons and human beings in the natural order is a problem. In the order of grace, this problem is at least to some extent solved, as the first divine person, the Father, is revealed and shows himself as a caring father. In this situation, when our relationship with God is explained by means of the analogy with human parent-child love, little children of good parents accept it joyfully. When they have earthly parents who love them dearly and whom they contentedly love and obey, if they are told that they also have a heavenly Father, who is infinitely superior to their earthly parents, that he loves them dearly and that they should love and obey him, they often come to have a relationship with God which makes sense to them and, talking about God in startlingly anthropomorphic ways, they show that he is very real to them. At this stage of their lives they look up to their parents and other adults, on whom they feel dependent, and it comes naturally to them to look up

to God and say: “Thank you, God, for a fine day and please make Granny well again.” Moreover, just as they feel safe because they know that their parents love them and will provide for them, so they feel completely safe because they believe that if anything happens to their parents God will still be there to take care of them. When people grow up, however, most of them gain confidence in themselves, they no longer feel little and dependent, they spend less time looking up to their parents, they leave home and their love-relationships with their parents move into the background of their lives. If God is to them only a heavenly father, their relationship with him tends to follow the same course: they tend to leave him in the sense of thinking less about him and he tends to mean less to them than he did when they were small.

To prevent this, some preachers vociferously insist on the weakness of human beings and they condemn self-reliance as pride, which for them is the greatest sin. This means that they endeavour to keep people pious by keeping them immature. Their message resonates in the minds and hearts of certain Christians who have low opinions of themselves and these remain emotionally dependent on God in a childish way, praying to him exactly as they prayed when they were infants. If they are admired for being devout, this confirms them in their “spirituality.” In some cases they profit from their dependence because it limits their responsibility and, inconsistently, they at the same time resent God for blocking their path to an adult life. These preachers and these “devout” people confirm atheists in their belief that religion keeps human beings down and that to affirm man and woman it is necessary to deny God.

Other Christians feel themselves to be, most of the time, independent, mature people; they feel capable of taking care of themselves and their dependents and they approach difficulties with “What can I do about this?”; when they pray, however, they use forms of prayer which they learned as children and, expressing helpless dependence, they implore God to solve all their problems for them or they sing hymns which are all about how safe we are because God is looking after us. That is, they are not their real selves when they pray and sing hymns.

It seems to me that we should think of the divine persons showing love for us by “letting go” when we grow up, and respecting and loving us as adults. We should feel that they respect our adult relationships
and our work and want us to assume responsibility for our lives, for other people and for the world, to tackle our problems and by action to overcome them. On this basis a theology of action in general and work in particular becomes possible. The love should remain strong, as ideally the love between parents and their grown-up sons and daughters is strong. And, as I shall say, we should have in addition to this love an ecstatic love for the divine persons, which should be at the centre of our lives.

Self-love in the order of grace

As I said earlier, some Christian writers maintained that self-love is thoroughly bad. Some, who perhaps did not go as far as that, said that it is not charity, that is, it is not an element of the life of grace. For instance, Gregory the Great said that “it is not possible to have a charity between fewer than two”\(^{409}\) and Richard of St Victor said:

> No one is properly said to have charity on the basis of one’s own private and particular love of oneself. And so it is necessary that love tend toward another for it to be charity.\(^{410}\)

This means that self-love, if it is love at all, is not charity, but surely self-love, without entirely changing its nature, is elevated by grace and is charity.

Ecstatic love

When we accept the divine persons as speaking to us we can accept them as persons and love them with ecstatic love. If we do this we fulfil

---

\(^{408}\) See above, p. 78.

\(^{409}\) Gregory the Great said: “Minus quam inter duos caritas haberi non potest. Nemo enim proprie ad se ipsum habere caritatem dicitur” (In Evang., Hom. 17, n. 1, \(PL\), 76, 1139). Quoted in Rousselot, \(The\ \ Problem\ of\ Love\), pp. 155, 164-165.

\(^{410}\) Richard of St Victor said: “Nullus autem pro privato et proprio sui ipsius amore dicitur proprie caritatem habere. Oportet itaque ut amor in alterum tendat, ut caritas esse queat.” (\(De\ \ Trinitate\), III, 2, \(PL\), 196, 916.) Quoted in Rousselot, \(The\ \ Problem\ of\ Love\), pp. 155, 164-165.
their wish and make actual that which until then could be only the offer of a gift.

Certain thinkers, many of whom belong to a Lutheran tradition, maintain that in faith and love God is active but we are passive. Bonhoeffer, for instance, said that love “is the name for what God does to man” and “love is something which happens to man, something passive, something over which he does not himself dispose.” It is, he said, “not man’s choice, but the election of man by God.”

Others say that we are active but they maintain that our activity in this instance is God’s pure gift to us; they deny that God offers his love equally to all and that some accept it and others refuse it as they decide; on the contrary, they say, God decides who accepts his love and who does not, he chooses those who accept it, so that if we love God it is in the last analysis not because of a choice for which we are responsible but because God chose us. I believe that this is wrong. I have said that meetings, personal communication and ecstatic love require acts of the will from both or all of the persons concerned: it is, I said, absolutely impossible to establish a relationship of mutual love with someone who refuses you. If this is true, there must be activity on our part, and did not Jesus call for an active response to himself and his teaching? When he began his mission, he presented himself to the people, not forcing but asking them to accept him. He sought followers, whom he invited, never forced, to join him. He pictured himself as a sower, who throws seeds on the ground and whether they take root or not is up to the ground, which may bluntly refuse them, accept them without strong commitment and then go back on its acceptance, or take them deeply into itself. He described his kingdom and dwelt on the firm commitment by which a person enters it.

From first to last he made it plain that to be his follower a person must opt for him.

The options which we make in faith and love are free and we are Christians of our free will. It is not that God has arbitrarily decided to give us a choice in this matter: it is of the nature of ecstatic love that

---

411 Bonhoeffer, Ethics, p. 52.
it be free on both sides, so that the divine persons can do no more than offer their love and hope that we will accept it and love them.

Are we free, in the sense of not obliged to accept their offer? What I have said about ecstatic love being free might seem to imply that we are, but all Christian theology says no. The truth may be that we are obliged, with an obligation that arises from our need and not from a divine command.

**Our love is both altruistic and beneficial**

In seventeenth century France there was a great controversy over “pure love.” On one side was Fénelon, who said that in a certain grade of love a saint loves God without thinking about any benefits he or she might obtain in this world or the next:

> There is a habitual state of love for God that is pure charity, without any admixture of a motive of self-interest. Neither fear of punishments nor desire of rewards forms part of this state any longer. God is no longer loved for the sake of merit, nor because of perfection, nor because of the happiness that is to be found in loving him.\(^{413}\)

That sounds like a very high grade of love, but Fénelon went on to say that in a still higher grade the saint deliberately excludes, all the time, every thought of his or her own salvation. Influenced by this kind of talk one woman endowed a series of Masses to be said after her death in thanksgiving to God for having decreed her salvation or damnation, as the case might be; a number of people lived with the conviction that they were destined to go to hell and said that they did not worry about this because only God’s glory mattered to them; and a young priest on his death-bed asked God to send him to hell so that divine justice might be manifested in him. Ronald Knox, from whom I take these cases, says that the controversy

\(^{413}\) This is one of Fénelon’s errors as listed in the brief “Cum alias” (1699) (Denziger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, ## 2351-2356).
thought of our own eternal happiness; that, and the practical question which was a pendant to it—whether in the extreme of desolation a soul might be encouraged to acquiesce in the prospect of its own eternal loss.\footnote{Knox, \textit{Enthusiasm}, p. 344. Alan Vincelette gives earlier examples of this idea in the Translator’s notes to Rousselot, \textit{The Problem of Love}, p. 241.} 

Fénelon or his more extreme disciples seem to have said that perfect love drives out hope. 

On the opposite side to Fénelon was Bossuet—they were both bishops—who, going to the opposite extreme, said:

\begin{quote}
According to St Augustine’s principle, which is unshakeable and which no one will ever call in question, the truest, best understood, most well-established and most constant thing in the world is that one not only wants to be happy, but that one wants only that, and everything for that.\footnote{Bossuet, \textit{Reponse à quatre lettres etc.}, n. ix; quoted by Stéphane Harent in “A propos de Fénelon: la question de l’amour pur,” p. 486.}
\end{quote}

As I said earlier, he completely denied the possibility of altruism.\footnote{See above, p. 36.} He was wrong. We can be altruistic and without altruism there cannot be love. We love the divine persons, then, for their sakes and we can sing the hymn which Bossuet would have refused to sing:

\begin{quote}
\textit{O God, I love thee not because I hope for heaven thereby.}
\end{quote}

But Fénelon was wrong, too. The love of the divine persons brings us great benefits—there is no danger that they will send us to hell for their own glory—and we do well to accept these gratefully and indeed to desire more. Hope is a cardinal Christian virtue and love without hope would not make sense.
Equality

There is a “reverential” way of thinking about God which has a long tradition behind it and which appeals to many deeply religious people. In this tradition, much is made of the divine infinity, eternity, omnipotence and immutability, there is much talk of the littleness, weakness and moral wretchedness of creatures, and it may be said that God loves us *because* we are weak and wretched. The emphasis here is not on how similar we are to God but on how different we are from him, the basic religious feeling is thought to be dependence and awe, and people sing of “amazing grace, that saved a wretch like me.” Churches are designed so as to be, above all, awe-inspiring and to make worshippers feel small. Liturgical services are designed to be impressive and mysterious, and if the congregation feels bewildered and insignificant, so much the better. If we talk to these people of the greatness of human beings or about how much we can achieve, they accuse us of Pelagian or even Luciferean pride; and since they believe that God loves us *because we are weak* they imagine that, whereas in asserting our weakness we attract God’s love, in affirming our strength we repel it. One trouble with all this is that, while it may encourage worship, it makes *love* between God and ourselves almost incomprehensible and so it makes it psychologically very difficult for people to love God. Moreover, Jesus, who told us to love God and to address him as our Father, clearly wants us to feel close to God, not infinitely far from him. Even if we work in the terms of the Physical Theory, therefore, and affirm what I call a solidarity-love between God and ourselves, it is better to stress the resemblance between the divine persons and ourselves than to place a great gulf between them and us.

I said earlier that ecstatic love is between equals. I quoted St Jerome, who said: “Friendship either finds men equal or makes them so”; William of Auvergne, who said: “Friends, as friends, are equal”; and Jaspers, who said that unconditional communication develops only when in the depths of their being self meets self on an equal footing. This might lead us to say that ecstatic love between the divine persons and ourselves is impossible, since we are not and cannot become their equals. Jesus, it is true, was the teacher of his apostles but at the end

he said that he had told them all he knew (to be precise, “everything I have heard from my Father”), so that there was now an equality between him and them and he said to them: “You are my friends” (John 15:14). Peter, James and John were his closest friends and just as someone in an emotional state cannot cope with a large number of people but does not want to be left alone, either, and as a rule wants to have only his closest friends, who are few in number, with him, so Jesus wanted Peter, James and John, and only them, to watch with him in the Garden on the night before he died. The members of the family at Bethany were also his friends. Many Christians would probably cope with all this by saying that as a human being or in his humanity Jesus had friends, but John of the Cross thought otherwise. He said that “the soul is made equal to God through love” and “for God to love the soul is for him to set it, after a certain manner, in himself, making it equal to himself.”418 The point here is that ecstatic love does not require or cause an equality of nature or perfections; it involves persons meeting on an equal footing. Also, there can be two loves, one of solidarity which exists between unequals, and ecstatic love as well.

Ecstasy: the indwelling

Paul says that the Spirit is in Christians, John says that Jesus is in his disciples (John 17:23) and that God abides in us and we in God (1 John 5:16), and theologians talk of the indwelling or presence of the Holy Spirit in the souls of those who are in the state of grace. As God is everywhere by his power, the question arises, “What is special about this?” The answer is that it is the being-in-the-other which is the ecstasy of love. It is true that the term “ecstasy” is not used in the scriptures but the term fits. It was used by “Denis the Areopagite,” who, writing in Greek, said that divine love involves ecstasy.419

418 John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle*, exposition of stanza 23, # 5; *The Complete Works*, II,126. We would now talk about the person rather than the soul.

419 Denis, *De divinis nominibus*, c. 4, # 13; *PG*, 3,712. Writing in Greek, Denis used the word *ecstasis*.
Thomas Aquinas often quoted this and he himself said: “God himself experienced ecstasy for love.”

The ecstatic union

I said earlier that in certain forms of mysticism persons completely lose themselves: I quoted Heiler, who said that in mystical experience “human personality is dissolved, disappears and is absorbed in the infinite unity of the Godhead.” Some Christians have had this idea. For instance, during the late middle ages Marguerite Porete believed that her soul had been annihilated by its union with God, and there was talk of this happening to others. Later, Catherine of Genoa said that God draws the human will “to the annihilation of its own being”; she said: “I find no more me, there is no longer any other I, but God”; and “My being is God … by true transformation and the annihilation of its own being.” In Enthusiasm, Knox says of Madame Guyon (1648-1717), who for a time was influential in France, that she seemed to think that “Madame Guyon had ceased to exist; that which spoke and acted in her was God,” which of course meant that she expected to be believed and obeyed. In this century Aldous Huxley said: “Direct knowledge of the [divine] Ground cannot be had except by union, and union can be achieved only by the annihilation of the

---

420 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1-2 28 3 sed contra. As I said earlier (above, p. 104), Thomas believed that the writings of “Denis the Areopagite” were by the person mentioned in Acts and so were almost biblical.

421 See Johannes Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, p. 198. Marguerite Porete was burnt.

422 Catherine Fieschi was born in 1447. At the age of thirteen she wanted to enter a convent as her older sister had done but she was not allowed to do so. At sixteen she was married to Juliano Adorno, who neglected her. For five years she suffered great loneliness in solitude, for another five years she sought distraction in society, then at twenty-six she had a conversion. So a few months later did her husband. For the next twenty years or so the couple devoted themselves to prayer and good works; she had no priestly direction during all this time. Juliano died in 1497 and two years later Cattaneo Marobotto began to direct Catherine, which he continued to do until she died in 1510. After her death he published her writings and she became famous. She was canonised in 1737 and is venerated as St Catherine of Genoa. This information comes from Pierre Debongnie, *Sainte Catherine de Gênes*; the quotations are from pp. 49-50. Debongnie says that Catherine’s mysticism had no nuptial character and was not trinitarian (p. xv).
self-regarding ego, which is the barrier separating the ‘Thou’ from the
‘That’.”\textsuperscript{423} He also said that a person should strive to lose the sense of
being anyone in particular; he must aim to abandon “the unutterable
ugliness of his own opaque and fragmentary being”\textsuperscript{424} and achieve “the
blissful freedom from personality.”\textsuperscript{425}

In the great Christian mystics such as Teresa of Avila and John of
the Cross, however, the “I” is affirmed, not annihilated, and Christian
mystics from St Bernard on have compared mystical union to mar-
riage,\textsuperscript{426} in which two persons are both distinct and united. In
mysticism as in ecstatic love, then, there is “union under the condition
of preserving one’s own integrity, one’s individuality”\textsuperscript{427} and in
mysticism as in ecstatic love “the paradox occurs that two beings
become one and yet remain two.”\textsuperscript{428} That is, if our relationships with
the divine persons are understood as ecstatic love, we can understand
mystical union in a way that is perfectly orthodox and at the same time
does justice to the experience of mystics.

Objectivisation

Ecstatic unions, we have seen, need to be objectivised in words and
actions and ideally in a “work of love,” a third being.\textsuperscript{429} For a man and
a woman this is a child; for the Father and the Son it is the Holy Spirit;
and for divine and human persons it is Christ, who is Son of God and
Son of Man, and who is one person with both the divine nature and
a human nature. This way of understanding the reason for the
Incarnation makes the Incarnation intrinsic to the first gift of grace
and it has the merit of making it not the object of an entirely distinct
option but part of what the gift of grace involves. Also, prayer and the
sacraments are words and actions in which our grace-relationship,
which is an ecstatic-love relationship, is objectivised and this is most

\textsuperscript{423} Huxley, \textit{The Perennial Philosophy}, chap. 2, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{424} Huxley, \textit{Time Must Have a Stop}, chap. 17, p. 134.
\textsuperscript{425} Huxley, \textit{After Many a Summer}, Part I, chap. 8, p. 83.
\textsuperscript{426} See Dom Cuthbert Butler, \textit{Western Mysticism}, pp. 140-142, 160-167; see also
Underhill, \textit{Mysticism}, pp. 136-140.
\textsuperscript{427} Fromm, \textit{The Art of Loving}, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{428} Fromm, quoted above, p. 116.
\textsuperscript{429} See above, p. 123.
Theological implications

obviously true of the eucharist, in which Christ gives himself to us in a visible or external way, and our actions of eating his body and drinking his blood perfectly signify and outwardly express our inner acceptance of his love.

Some authors maintain that violent death is part of the human condition, so that the crucifixion is to be understood as an element of the Incarnation. Also, I expect sooner or later to find that a Christian theologian has read the literature of Romantic Passion, been deeply moved by it and in a flash of inspiration has seen Jesus’ death as a romantic love-death. Absolute love or love at the highest level, he will have said, is fulfilled in death, which true lovers desire and in which they consummate their love, and Jesus died not to satisfy the demands of justice on our behalf but purely and simply because of love, and we, moved by our love, must die with him. If you have never been either intellectually or emotionally satisfied by attempts to explain what it means to say that Jesus died for us, he will have said, go to Tristan und Isolde as soon as you can and in the Liebestod scene, as the music overwhelms you, the mystery of Jesus’ death will be revealed and you will find intellectual and emotional peace. As I said, I expect sooner or later to find myself reading something along these lines; but I am not looking forward to it. However the crucifixion is explained, it should not be in either of these ways.

The natural world in the new situation

At times, when people fall in love and get married they virtually abandon their previous existence: they move, for instance, to another country, leaving behind their families, work and interests. This, however, is exceptional. As a rule, when a man and woman fall in love and get married, they retain their relationships with their families, they retain their interests (for instance, in jazz, Spain, poetry or a sport) and, at least for a time, their work, and each respects the other’s commitments and interests. The ecstatic love is an addition in their lives, it involves few or no subtractions, and it may enhance the values which had earlier been present: for instance, where the man enjoyed

430 See above, p. 171.
his work because it gave him a sense of achievement and made him financially independent, now he still enjoys it that way but, in addition, experiences it joyfully as how he supports his family. In a somewhat similar way, our ecstatic love with the divine persons does not take all meaning or value out of our natural lives. On the contrary, grace “elevates” nature, which continues to have its intrinsic value. The natural order, then, continues to have a certain autonomy, which the divine persons respect: in farming, manufacturing, banking, the sciences, the universities, the arts and other secular domains we seek secular solutions to the problems which arise, and politics is a secular business even when all the people in a country are believing Christians. Also, natural loves such as self-love, parent-child love, sibling love, sexual love and friendship retain their natural character and value and are elevated by grace or given religious value, so that they become charity.

Natural troubles

Clearly, the entry of the Trinity into our world by revelation and ecstatic love has not completely transformed the natural world. There is sickness and pain and mistakes are being made. Also, we have instincts which were natural at an earlier time but which now cause us to experience impulses which we should resist. These were once explained as consequences of original sin, which is to say that a theological explanation was given for them, but it seems more sensible to say that they are perfectly natural, only out of date like our vestigial organs. Also, for people who are unaware of revelation there is still immorality, which causes enormous harm but is not, properly speaking, sin, which I shall now define.

The relationship can be ended: sin

A relationship of ecstatic love can be ended by either of the persons. Sin ought to be understood in terms of friendship or marriage: it is refusal of love or the rupture of an ecstatic love-relationship. I told

\[431\] See above, p. 243.
earlier the story of James and Susan and James’s parents. When James was happily married to Susan, his parents loved him with a parental love and they were also his friends; when he wronged Susan, however, they ceased to regard him as a friend and they also broke off communication with him, but they still loved him as their son. A sinner’s relationships with the divine persons may be analogous to James’s relationships with his parents. On the one hand, they do not accept what he has done and his present attitude towards it, and they recognise that since he has broken it the relationship between him and them no longer exists. On the other hand, they love him as their creature, as James’s parents continue to love him as their son, with solidarity love. Thomas Aquinas said that God loves sinners as natures or as beings, but hates them as sinners because as sinners they lack being, but we need not agree with him there. James’s parents do not hate him—if, for instance, they were to hear of harm befalling him they would not rejoice—and surely the attitude of the divine persons to sinners is similar: they are sad to see them doing damage to themselves and to others and they hope that they will change their attitude and return to them. If sinners do repent, the divine persons at once receive them back and the relationship of ecstatic love is restored.

What about those, if there are any, who persist in their rejection until death and go to hell? If people have rejected God in a radical way and have not repented, they have excluded themselves from the loving union with the divine persons which is the essence of heaven. Thomas Aquinas said that God and the blessed in heaven rejoice to see damned souls suffering because they deserve to suffer and a good person is pleased to see justice done, but surely the divine persons’ hurt is deepened and they sadly miss those who of their own free will have refused their love, while the blessed in heaven are saddened by the

432 See above, p. 186.
433 “Deus autem peccatores, inquantum sunt naturae quaedam, amat: sic enim et sunt et ab ipso sunt. Inquantum vero peccatores sunt, non sunt sed ab esse deficiunt, et hoc in eis a Deo non est. Unde secundum hoc ab ipso odio habentur.” (Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, 1 20 2 ad 4. If people are sinners by their personal acts or as persons, Thomas here uses a distinction between nature and person to affirm the existence of two distinct attitudes in God, as I do.
434 Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, Suppl. 94 3.
knowledge that other human beings, especially any whom they knew personally and loved, are in hell. I know that it is traditional teaching that God is perfectly happy and that heaven is a state of unblemished happiness, but let us not push this to an extreme and make the divine persons and the blessed into hard-hearted, insensitive persons. On the other hand, I said earlier that if a human being is hurt by someone whom he or she has loved in a way that breaks the relationship, he or she should make a life in which that person has no part.\textsuperscript{435} Perhaps the divine persons accept the separation as a fact which they cannot change, and, if I may put it this way, their life goes on without these people, with those who love them joining in.

**Heaven**

Heaven needs to be understood not as the vision of the divine essence or nature,\textsuperscript{436} nor as knowing at last what God is,\textsuperscript{437} but as ecstatic union with the divine persons. Juan Alfaro says:

> To imagine the vision of God as if it were merely the contemplation of an infinite object or the intuition of an unlimited essence would be to strip it of its most authentic meaning. The vision is first and foremost an immediate personal encounter with the living God\textsuperscript{438}

or, as I would prefer to say, with the divine persons. Finally, Rahner says that the beatific vision necessarily involves a real relationship of the creature to each of the divine persons in his real individuality.\textsuperscript{439}

\textsuperscript{435} See above, p. 151.
\textsuperscript{436} In 1336 Benedict XII published a constitution on the beatific vision in which, as Rahner has pointed out, there is no mention of the divine persons and heaven is said to be knowledge of the divine essence (Denziger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, ## 1000-1001).
\textsuperscript{437} Lonergan said: “Grasping properly *quid sit Deus* [what God is] is the beatific vision” (*Verbum*, p. 208).
\textsuperscript{439} Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, IV, p. 95n.
5 Christian love of other human beings

From time to time Christians are carried away by their love of God and say that we should love only God. Ernesto Cardenal, for example, says that “our arms were made to embrace the infinite and nothing less.” But Jesus summed up the law in two commandments, love of God and love of the neighbour, not one. There are, however, different ideas about Christian love of the neighbour.

The idea that Christian love is quite different from natural loves

According to one idea, we have loves of various kinds, such as come naturally to us and are not specifically Christian, and in addition we have, or should have, a Christian love for people, which is different. The basis of natural love is natural solidarity such as exists between members of a family or choice based on natural affinity; the basis of Christian love is supernatural or specifically religious. (Note: I am using the word “natural” here as opposed to “supernatural,” not as opposed to “unnatural” or “personal.”) According to this theory, most Christian mothers have two distinct loves for their infant children: a natural maternal love for them as their children, and a specifically Christian love for them as children of the Father and brothers and sisters of Christ.

According to this idea, one of the differences between natural loves and Christian love is that naturally one loves some persons more than others whereas Christian love is (or should be) extended equally to all. A mother naturally loves her own children more than other children and solidarity love varies according to how much people have in common. Also, sexual love is exclusive and, as Gilbert Mailaender says, friendship is “preferential love.” Kierkegaard, however, maintained that to love with Christian love means “to make no distinctions.” This is taken to mean that as we advance towards Christian perfection we should abandon our natural loves and approach a state of soul in which we love all human beings with a purely religious love.

440 Cardenal, Love, pp. 50-51.
Meilander says that, since Christian love is for all human beings and is equal in all cases, friendship is a good thing which has its proper place, so that not all Christians are required to sacrifice it, but it is transcended in perfect Christian non-preferential love for all.\footnote{Meilander, \textit{Friendship}, pp. 32-35.} In many religious orders, novices used to be told that they had to cut their emotional ties to their families and to any friends whom they might have had, not form any attachments to particular persons, and henceforth love all persons with a purely spiritual and equal love. It was pointed out to them that Jesus refused to give any preference to members of his family, saying, “Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother” (Matt 12:50), and that he said, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26), which (they were told) means that natural loves must be uprooted from the soul and thrown away.

Sometimes it was said to be natural, as distinct from Christian, to love someone as a particular person and at one time spiritual directors, when they spoke, especially to religious, about the practice of charity, said things like this: “Do not become interested in the man, woman or child who happens to be the object of your charity, with his or her particular qualities: see only Christ, who is the same in all human beings. That is, love not \textit{people} but \textit{Christ in people}. Also, do not reveal yourself personally to people and cause them to become aware of \textit{you}; rather, hide your individual self so that they will think of the good you do as coming from the Church and ultimately from Christ, to whom rather than to you their gratitude will rise.”

\textbf{A better idea}

According to another idea, our Christian faith does not inspire in us a Christian love which is distinct from our natural loves: rather, as I said above, it “elevates” our natural loves so that they are Christian and at the same time natural. As our natural loves are unequal, this means that a Christian does not love all other persons equally and ought not to be told that he or she should strive to do so.
If this is right, a mother does not love her infant child with a natural maternal love and also with Christian charity. Rather, if she is a Christian her natural love for her child is Christian and in loving her child and taking care of it she practises Christian charity. Also, a Christian husband has solidarity-love for his wife, which would remain if he were to cease to have sexual love for her, and he also and far more intensely has sexual love for her; and because he is a Christian both these loves are invested with religious significance so that his Christian love for his wife is not a third love existing alongside the others in his heart, and when they make love they express not a secular love which is distinct from their Christian love but their Christian sexual love. If two Christians are friends, their friendship, which is “preferential,” is Christian charity in one of its forms; and if two religious in a community are friends, they do not have for each other a natural friendship and, distinct from it, the fraternal charity of their order. In all these cases there is one love which is both natural and Christian, and it is not put aside but heightened as a person advances in the spiritual life.

Like all ecstatic love, our Christian charity in the form of ecstatic love is for persons themselves and the persons whom we love should know that we love them—not Christ, who is someone else, in them, but them. Also, we should reveal ourselves to persons whom we love and put ourselves into our love so that the persons whom we love (I will not call them the objects of our charity) will know that we love them. Our love will be no less Christian for being ours.

Jesus told us to love everyone, including not only those who do good to us but also strangers from whom we can expect nothing in return, our enemies and those who persecute us. If I am right in what I said earlier, it is possible for all people, whether they are Christians or not, to see all other men and women as one with them in humanity, to have a general love for human beings, to care about what is happening to people anywhere and to accept anyone who comes close as a brother or sister in what used to be called The Family of Man. As we have seen, it is even possible to love enemies. In asking us to love everyone without exception, therefore, Jesus is not asking for something which is absurd or not humanly possible.
Love can end

Paul said, “Love never comes to an end” (1 Cor 13:8), which seems to imply that in the order of grace if a relationship ends there never was love. Unfortunately, the situation is not so simple. As natural ecstatic love can end, and as ecstatic love between divine and human persons can be ended by the human persons, so even “elevated” ecstatic love between human beings can end, as the examples of Susan and James, and James and his parents, show, if they are Christians.

Some authors maintain that when we are hurt by people whom we have loved we must always forgive them, and continue to love them, even if they are utterly unrepentant. It seems to me that unless the wrongdoer repents the wronged person cannot forgive, not because it is too difficult but because it is intrinsically impossible. Like James’s parents in the story, we can have solidarity-love for people who have hurt us, and we should do this, but we must face the fact that the relationship of ecstatic love has ceased to exist and not act in any way that would seem to affirm its existence. Is this unchristian? Jesus said:

> If your brother sins against you, go to him and show him his fault. But do it privately, just between yourselves. If he listens to you, you will have won your brother back.

“If he listens to you” means if he admits his fault and says he is sorry, and you forgive him. Jesus goes on to say that if your brother refuses to listen to you, you should try again, taking one or two other persons with you, and if that does not work you should tell the whole story to the church. He concludes:

> If the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. (Matt 18:15-17)

In his society, good Jewish people had occasional business dealings with gentiles and tax collectors, but they did not eat with them and they did not make friends among them, so that this means: if attempts at reconciliation fail, have nothing to do, socially or personally, with people who have hurt you.
The Church

If the Church is in the first place a community of love, then ecstatic love as well as solidarity-love keeps it together. Moreover, this community objectivises itself in its sacraments, its ceremonies, its festivals and above all in the eucharist, where eating and drinking are expressions of love, as they ought almost always to be.

Ecumenism needs to be understood in the light of love. Christians of different churches have been divided in at least three ways: doctrinally, organisationally and by hostility. If, at times, doctrinal disagreement makes it necessary for an organisation to divide, this does not make hostility between the parties absolutely necessary, since it is possible for people to disagree with each other and belong to separate organisations without personal animosity, but doctrinal disagreements and organisational divisions have in fact led to hostility, as they nearly always do. If we ask which of these three kinds of division is, from a Christian point of view, the worst, the answer has to be the third. It is sad when Christians disagree about doctrines which are near to being fundamental and it is sad when because of this or for other reasons they form separate churches, but when they hate one another it is far worse. Now the movement towards the eventual union of all Christian churches involves trying to resolve doctrinal disagreements and it involves uniting organisations wherever possible; but it should consist primarily in lessening the hostility between Christians of different churches and so making it possible to talk about “the Christian community,” meaning all or nearly all Christians, and meaning, by “community,” people who love one another. This is possible without doctrinal agreement and organisational union, it is happening at a great rate, and it is wonderful. Let me hasten to add that I am not suggesting that it is enough. We must work to overcome the other forms of disunity as well, and a result of the friendliness which now exists between Christians of different churches, and perhaps especially among their theologians, is that doctrinal and other discussions between Christians of different churches are friendly conversations between people who want to reach agreement, not debates between adversaries who are out to win arguments.
Conclusion

If it is true for all time and for all societies that God is our Father, it is also true that the statement means somewhat different things to people in different societies. In patriarchal societies where fathers retain power over their adult sons and unmarried daughters, never “letting go” till they die, God is understood to be a father who, since he does not die, never “lets go.” If one society were as good as any other we could perhaps say that God is a Father to different peoples in different ways, or else that we should study the culture in which the doctrine was first revealed and say that God is our Father in the sense which the word had then. If, on the other hand, we can claim that our grasp of the principle that persons must be respected and allowed their freedom has enabled us to understand a parent’s role better than it was understood in the past, we can revise some old ideas about the fatherhood of God and introduce into our relationship with God the Father the notion of his “letting go,” out of respect and love for us.

If people in a polygamous society, in which wives are kept virtually imprisoned in harems, were to hear that Christians believe that Christ’s relationship with his church is like of a husband and wife, they would be sure to get the wrong idea. But what is the right idea? Is the relationship like that of husbands and wives in the society which Paul had in mind when he made the comparison? If so, it involves inequality. Or is it like the relationship of equality which we now believe to be right? Since it would be very strange indeed if the relationship were more like a faulty than a sound husband-wife relationship, it should be thought of as one of equality.

In general, in the past many people have had relationships with God which were unhappy and which in some measure stunted their growth, and the reason was that they had mistaken ideas about human love and hence also about the love of God. To be on the right footing with God, we need to have sound ideas about human love.

443 Concerning parents “letting go,” see above, p. 71.
This is not a list of books about love but a list of the books and articles to which reference has been made, with the facts of publication.


Beauvoir, Simone de: 

Berdyaev, Nikolai: 

Berger, Peter: 


Buber, Martin: 


Camus, Albert:  


Claudel, Paul:  

Coffey, David:  

Cowburn, John:  


*De adhaerendo Deo.* Once attributed to Albert the Great and to be found in his *Works.* English translation: *Of Cleaving to God.* Oxford: Blackfriars, 1947.


Dominian, Jack:  


Finance, Joseph de:  


Bibliography

Fromm, Erich:

Gaylin, Willard:


Greeley, Andrew:


Huxley, Aldous:
After Many a Summer. London: Chatto & Windus, 1939.
The Perennial Philosophy. London: Chatto & Windus, 1946
Time Must Have a Stop. London: Chatto & Windus, 1945.


Jaspers, Karl:


*Of Cleaving to God*. See *De adhaerendo Deo*. 


Rahner, Karl:

Rand, Ayn:


Richard Rolle (ca. 1300—1349). *The Fire of Love*.


Rousselot, Pierre:


Saint-Exupéry, Antoine de:
- All his works:
- Particular works:

Sartre, Jean-Paul:


Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre:


Troisfontaines, Roger:
   De l'existence à l'être. Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1953. This book is an orderly presentation of Marcel's thought.


Wilson, Edward O.:  

Wojtyla, Karol:
Index

acceptance 19-24, 26
altruism 35-42, 59, 78, 156-157
Anselmian theory 250
benefits (ecstatic love) 153
chance 110, 177-178
children 49-54, 65-68
Christian love of others 279-282
Church 283
commitment 176
communication 69-71, 84, 112
conflict 72, 144-145, 191
creation 254
early human beings 235
ecstasy 125, (indwelling) 272-273
eccstatic love ch 12 etc., (and divine persons) ch 27
eccstatic theory 232-233
ecstatic union 138-141, 183-187, (with divine persons) 273-274
egoism, theory 35-38
end (parental love) 73, (ecstatic love) 148-151, (sexual love) 192, (sin) 276, 282
equality 137, 147f. 271
eternal 151-152, 194
evil, moral 33
evolution 235, 244
exclusiveness of sexual love 170-171
expression 145
faith 263-264
false forms (solidarity-love) 91 ff., (sexual love) ch 22
finding 174
fraternal love 77 ff.
free 322, 69, 102, 110, 120, 135-136, 179, 189-191
friendship ch 23
friendship & sexual love ch 17
future 143
gift 42-44, 54
God’s love for us (as beings) 256-57
goodness distributes itself 49
grace 262
heaven 278
inexplicable? 127
instinct 51, 238
knowing another 115-117
letting go 71
loneliness 157-160
love of God
marriage ch 20
maturity (in ecstatic love) 141, 180
meeting 109
mutual
mysticism 247-248 257
natural law theories 242-244
nature and grace 254
need-“love” 203
objectivisation 145, 187-188, (of love with divine persons) 274-275
obligations of parents 57
other, the 122
parental love 55-64
physical theory 229-232
presence 112

quasi-parents 63, 76

reach of solidarity-love 86-89
realism 154-156
rejection 30, 74
relativism, cultural 241-242
revelation 263-264
Romantic Passion 205-297

self-love 25-34, 141
selfishness 26
sexual love ch 18-ch 19
sexual love & friendship ch 17
significance (solidarity-love) 104,
  (ecstatic love) 160-161,
  (friendship) 216,
  (sexual love) ch 21
sin 276
social influence 53
solidarity 77
suffering & evil 261

table 45
tribalism 96
Trinity 247-253

union: see ecstatic union

value-theory 224-228
Victorine theory 251