

points out that the emergence of romance (which he considers primarily a masculine affection) has sometimes, of late, been replaced by mature love. He says, in summary, that

love was originally opposed to sex, that it emerged as a counterpower to it, and that their conflict resulted later in the glorious reconciliation and amalgamation of the two enemies.²⁰³

But his principal point about the history of love is that it began with the feminine rebellion against indifferent lust.

Here is the seed of the passionate emotion we observe today, the germ of what we call romance. I want to point out—most politely, most politely—that love, whether it is evil or good, is an invention of the ladies, not of men.²⁰⁴

Erich Fromm

Fromm, like Reik, is an author who considers love beneficial or therapeutic. Though he does not think of love as a panacea for all human ills, he does view it as the only real solution for the most basic problem of human existence: personal isolation. "The deepest need of man . . . is the need to overcome his separateness, to leave the prison of his aloneness."²⁰⁵ For Fromm, love, "the only sane and satisfactory" solution for this problem, is far less possible in contemporary society than ever before.²⁰⁶

The most important notion in Fromm's analysis of love is the desire for interpersonal union.²⁰⁷

This desire for interpersonal fusion is the most powerful striving in man. It is the most fundamental passion, it is the force which keeps the human race together, the clan, the family, society. . . . Without love, humanity could not exist for a day. Yet, if we call the achievement of interpersonal union

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 129. For a discussion of the whole theory, see pp. 120–136; and Part III, pp. 149–156.

²⁰⁵ *The Art of Loving*, Ch. II, Sect. 1, p. 9.

²⁰⁶ See *ibid.*, Ch. IV, p. 133. See also Ch. II, Sect. 2, p. 40. "No objective observer of our Western life can doubt that love—brotherly love, motherly love, and erotic love—is a relatively rare phenomenon, and that its place is taken by a number of forms of pseudo-love which are in reality so many forms of the disintegration of love." (*Ibid.*, Ch. III, p. 83.)

²⁰⁷ The focus throughout *The Art of Loving* is on love between human beings. At one or two points, Fromm says that we see "love or rather, the equivalent of love, in animals." (*Ibid.*, Ch. II, Sect. 1, p. 7.) He also says, in the course of discussing the love between a man and a woman, that the masculine-feminine polarity exists in nature (both in animate and inanimate nature). (See *ibid.*, p. 34.) These remarks, however, are casual asides. There is nothing in Fromm's work that suggests a fully developed theory of love as a universal or cosmic principle.

"love," we find ourselves in a serious difficulty. Fusion can be achieved in different ways. . . . Should they all be called love? Or should we reserve the word "love" only for a specific kind of union . . . ?

. . . Do we refer to love as the mature answer to the problem of existence, or do we speak of these immature forms of love which may be called *symbiotic union*? . . . I shall call love only the former.²⁰⁸

He explains symbiotic union between human beings, using the pattern of the biological relationship between the pregnant mother and the fetus, a physical relationship of complete domination and dependence. Translated into the psychic level, Fromm sees this relationship as representative of two forms of symbiotic union, the active (or sadistic) and the passive (or masochistic).

The sadist seeks escape from personal isolation by making another totally dependent on him. But, he is as dependent on the other person as the other person is on him. "The difference is only that the sadistic person commands, exploits, hurts, humiliates, and that the masochistic person is commanded, exploited, hurt, humiliated." The masochistic person is submissive. He "escapes from the unbearable feeling of isolation and separateness by making himself part and parcel of another person who directs him, guides him, protects him."²⁰⁹ He renounces his integrity and allows himself to be totally manipulated by another.

These two people, seeking union, have in common "fusion without integrity." They are involved in a symbiotic and not a real relationship. "In contrast to symbiotic union, mature love is *union under the condition of preserving one's integrity*, one's individuality." Love allows one to overcome his sense of isolation while allowing him a personality in his own right. "In love the paradox occurs that two beings become one and yet remain two."²¹⁰

Fromm discusses other forms of symbiotic escape. He mentions the executive who tries to escape by burying himself in his work. He sees alcoholism, drug addiction, and sheer sexuality as kinds of "orgiastic fusion," which, because they are transitory solutions, only aggravate the problem. He also observes that social conformity is a way in which individuals choose to identify with others and thus mitigate the torture of isolation.²¹¹ Of these forms of escape, Fromm says:

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 18. Actually, Fromm does call the impulses of immature or symbiotic union "love" throughout the book. The distinction between these impulses and mature or real love, however, is not merely verbal. Fromm dwells on substantive differences which preclude a decisive conceptual bond between the desire for symbiotic and real union. He includes only the latter in his theory of love.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20, *passim*.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 20–21, *passim*.

²¹¹ See *ibid.*, pp. 12–18.

The unity achieved in productive work is not interpersonal; the unity achieved in orgasmic fusion is transitory; the unity achieved by conformity is only pseudo-unity. Hence, they are only partial answers to the problem of existence. The full answer lies in the achievement of interpersonal union, of fusion with another person, in *love*.²¹²

However important it is, the desire for union, in any form of real love, cannot be understood as benevolent.²¹³ The individual is seen as miserable, isolated with his innermost thoughts, feelings, hopes, fears, and ambitions. Love is, in part, the effort to free oneself from this isolation. To that extent, it involves acquisitive tendencies. But Fromm distinguishes the desire for the union of love and the desire for symbiotic union most frequently in terms of the difference between an acquisitive desire, which does not involve exploitation, and an acquisitive desire, which does. The acquisitive desires of real love never are realized intentionally at the expense of the beloved.

Fromm states repeatedly that there can be no real love in which benevolent desire does not predominate:

In the most general way, the active character of love can be described by stating that love is primarily *giving*, not receiving.²¹⁴

A woman who says she loves flowers and does not water them does not, in fact, love them. "Love is the active concern for the life and the growth of that which we love."²¹⁵ Although the helpless person "loves" his master and the child its parents, it is only "in the love of those who do not serve a purpose, [that] love begins to unfold."²¹⁶

Though the controlling aim of love is another's welfare, Fromm does not deny that the lover's good also is involved. Having asserted that the selfish person is unable to love, he asks: "Does not this prove that concern for others and concern for oneself are unavoidable alternatives? This would be so if selfishness and self-love were identical. But that assumption is the very fallacy which has led to so many mistaken conclusions concerning our problem."²¹⁷ He argues that

²¹² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

²¹³ This is true whether the desire takes the form of wanting to be like someone else or the form of the desire for the union of complementarity.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Sect. 3, p. 48. Fromm maintains "that the ability to love as an act of giving depends on the character development of the person. It presupposes the attainment of a predominantly productive orientation; in this orientation the person has overcome dependency, narcissistic omnipotence, the wish to exploit others, or to hoard, and has acquired faith in his own human powers, courage to rely on his powers in the attainment of his goals. To the degree that these qualities are lacking, he is afraid of giving himself—hence of loving." (*Ibid.*, Sect. 1, p. 26.)

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Sect. 3, p. 60.

the attitudes toward others and toward ourselves, far from being contradictory, are basically *conjunctive*. With regard to the problem under discussion this means: love of others and love of ourselves are not alternatives. On the contrary, an attitude of love toward themselves will be found in all those who are capable of loving others.²¹⁸

Fromm means at least three things in saying that self-love and love for another are compatible. First, since all love implies union, whatever good one does for another is done also and indirectly for oneself.²¹⁹ The lover "in giving . . . cannot help bringing something to life in the other person, and this which is brought to life reflects back to him; in truly giving, he cannot help receiving that which is given back to him."²²⁰ The giver consciously affects his own welfare by altering for the better the person with whom he has achieved "interpersonal fusion." Since the barriers of separateness have been broken down, what affects one affects the other.

Second, he means that true giving is always accompanied by an "exquisite joy." Though the lover "does not give in order to receive," he nevertheless derives a personal and unique satisfaction in helping another.²²¹

Giving is the highest expression of potency. In the very act of giving, I experience my strength, my wealth, my power. This experience of heightened vitality and potency fills me with joy. I experience myself as overflowing, spending, alive, hence as joyous. Giving is more joyous than receiving, not because it is a deprivation, but because in the act of giving lies the expression of my aliveness.²²²

Third, Fromm means that the lover seeks mutual love. Though he does not give only for the sake of this return, he, nevertheless, tries "to make the other person a giver also."²²³

That the self-interest involved in love cannot be a primary motive Fromm makes clear when he says:

The *selfish* person is interested only in himself, wants everything for himself, feels no pleasure in giving, but only in taking. The world outside is looked at only from the standpoint of what he can get out of it; he lacks interest in the needs of others, and respect for their dignity and integrity.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 59. "The love for my own self is inseparably connected with the love for any other being." (*Ibid.*)

²¹⁹ Fromm argues that those who sacrifice their own interest for others, who never want anything for themselves, who seem to be "disinterested" in their giving are really basically selfish. (See *ibid.*, pp. 60 ff.)

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, Sect. 1, p. 25.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

²²³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

He can see nothing but himself; he judges everyone and everything from its usefulness to him; he is basically unable to love.²²⁴

Fromm specifically discusses four types of interpersonal love: brotherly, erotic, motherly, and fatherly.²²⁵ He says that there are, in addition to the desire for union and benevolence, four elements "common to all forms of love. These are *care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge*."²²⁶

Care seems to be a particular kind of benevolence. Fromm says that this element is most evident in a mother's love for her child. It is a concern for the welfare of another but more particularly it is an active concern for the *growth and development* of that other.²²⁷ Closely connected with care is responsibility. ("To be 'responsible' means to be able and ready to 'respond.'") In the case of the mother and child, the mother is responsible because she makes the child's physical needs her own worry. In the love between adults, responsibility is taken for the psychic needs of the other person. "Respect means the concern that the other person should grow and unfold as he is." It implies not only the absence of exploitation but also that help is given to another so that he may develop *in his own ways*.²²⁸

Whatever Fromm means by knowledge, it is not simply a cognitive element, not merely an intellectual judgment or perception. "The only way of full knowledge lies in the *act* of love: this act transcends thought, it transcends words." This knowledge apparently is a kind of illumination achieved through union. "Love is active penetration of the other person, in which my desire to know is stilled by union. In the act of fusion I know you, I know myself, I know everybody—and I 'know' nothing."²²⁹

As three of the four elements in all loves are varieties of, or imply, benevolence, we may say that they serve to emphasize the importance of this critical notion for Fromm's conception of love. There is no doubt that he thinks there is no love without it.

"The most fundamental kind of love, which underlies all types of love, is *brotherly love*."²³⁰ Fromm speaks of it as a love among equals, *i.e.*, a love that can exist among men simply because of their common humanity. Because they all are human, they all are, from time to time, in need of help. But love of those who are in need of help is only the beginning of brotherly love. Its true expression is in the love for the stranger and even

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, Sect. 3, p. 60.

²²⁵ Fromm also mentions "self-love." In this connection he makes two points. The first is that without self-respect one cannot love another. The second is that caring for another does not preclude caring for oneself. (See *ibid.*, pp. 57–63.)

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, Sect. 1, p. 26.

²²⁷ See *ibid.*, pp. 26–27.

²²⁸ See *ibid.*, p. 28.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 30–31. See also Ch. III, p. 103; and Ch. II, Sect. I, p. 32.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, Sect. 3, p. 47.

for the enemy. It is not discriminating; the degree to which it does discriminate is the degree to which it is not love. "If a person loves only one other person and is indifferent to the rest of his fellow men, his love is not love but a symbiotic attachment, or an enlarged egotism."²³¹ Brotherly love is, by definition, a universal love.

In one sense, erotic love is and must be not a universal but an exclusive love, since it is the desire for the union of complementarity.²³² In another sense, Fromm insists that, if erotic love is not a universal love, if it is not based on brotherly love, it is not love at all:

One can often find two people "in love" with each other who feel no love for anybody else. Their love is, in fact, an egotism *à deux*; they are two people who identify themselves with each other, and who solve the problem of separateness by enlarging the single individual into two. They have the experience of overcoming aloneness, yet, since they are separated from the rest of mankind, they remain separated from each other and alienated from themselves; their experience of union is an illusion.

He then adds:

Erotic love is exclusive, but it loves in the other person all of mankind, all that is alive. It is exclusive only in the sense that I can fuse myself fully and intensely with one person only. Erotic love excludes the love for others only in the sense of erotic fusion, full commitment in all aspects of life—but *not in the sense of deep brotherly love*.²³³

Sexual desire is present in an erotic love relationship, but in and by itself is insufficient for real love. A purely sexual desire is a desire for symbiotic union. "Because sexual desire is in the minds of most people coupled with the idea of love, they are easily misled to conclude that they love each other when they want each other physically." But Fromm claims that if "the desire for physical union is not stimulated by love, if erotic love is not also brotherly love, it never leads to union in more than an orgiastic,

²³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 46. See also pp. 47–48. Fromm does not mean that brotherly love implies active concern for every living man. He speaks of this love rather as an attitude or orientation of character which disposes one to want to help all those with whom one comes into contact. (See *ibid.*, p. 46.)

²³² Fromm obviously connects the union of complementarity with erotic love. He notes at an early point that the "polarity of the sexes is disappearing, and with it erotic love, which is based on this polarity." (*Ibid.*, Sect. 1, p. 15.) He concedes that the masculine-feminine polarity is most obviously a biological one, but affirms that it is more than physical: "The polarity between the male and female principles exists also *within* each man and each woman. Just as physiologically man and woman each have hormones of the opposite sex, they are bisexual also in the psychological sense." (*Ibid.*, p. 33.)

²³³ *Ibid.*, Sect. 3, p. 55. (Second italics added.) See also pp. 52–57.



transitory sense."²³⁴ Sexual desire is a part of erotic love only when it "is blended with tenderness."²³⁵

The prime characteristic of mother love is that it is unconditional. The mother cares for and will protect her child, not primarily because the child is gifted, strong, beautiful but because the child is her own. She loves him without reservation despite his defects.²³⁶

The paradigm of mother love is love for the helpless. In contrast to brotherly and erotic love, the relationship between child and mother is one in which one person constantly needs help and the other constantly gives it. "It is for this altruistic, unselfish character that motherly love has been considered the highest kind of love, and the most sacred of all emotional bonds." Fromm adds that one must distinguish two phases of such love: the love for the helpless infant and the love for the growing child. The love for the helpless infant is by far the easier; almost all mothers experience it instinctively. They eagerly care for the infant "in spite of the fact that they do not 'get' anything in return from the child, except a smile or the expression of satisfaction in his face." But the mother is put to trial as the child begins to grow. For now her loving function is to help him grow and "eventually become a completely separate human being." The mother must seek the child's proper separation from her and her total care. As Fromm puts it: "In erotic love, two people who were separate become one. In motherly love, two people who were one become separate."²³⁷ Separation often is difficult. In Fromm's view, many mothers fail to achieve it. "Only the really loving woman, the woman who is happier in giving than in taking, who is firmly rooted in her own existence, can be a loving mother when the child is in the process of separation." He adds that "a woman can be a truly loving mother only if she can *love*; if she is able to love her husband, other children, strangers, all human beings."²³⁸ Mother love, as erotic love, cannot be completely exclusive and still be real love.

Father love, unlike mother love, is conditional. The father loves the child

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 54. Fromm observes earlier that "in many individuals in whom separateness is not relieved in other ways, the search for the sexual orgasm assumes a function which makes it not very different from alcoholism and drug addiction. It becomes a desperate attempt to escape the anxiety engendered by separateness, and it results in an ever-increasing sense of separateness, since the sexual act without love never bridges the gap between two human beings, except momentarily." (*Ibid.*, Sect. 1, p. 12.)

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, Sect. 3, p. 54. The sexual desire is stimulated by love and not vice versa. (See *ibid.*)

²³⁶ See *ibid.*, Sect. 2, p. 41. Of this love, Fromm says: "Unconditional love corresponds to one of the deepest longings, not only of the child, but of every human being." (*Ibid.*)

²³⁷ See *ibid.*, Sect. 3, pp. 50-51, *passim*. There is still the desire for union in the late phase of motherly love. However, it is no longer the union of total dependence.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

because the child deserves it; it is a love that the child can lose if he fails to measure up to expected standards. Fromm says that the balance between the "mother's and the father's attitudes toward the child correspond to the child's own needs."²³⁹ The mother, if she makes the proper transition and does not perpetuate the child's dependence, gives the child the necessary security he must have in life. The father, on the other hand, because he places demands on the child, assumes the function of teacher, the one who introduces him to the world. In the order of time, maternal love precedes paternal love. Fromm places great importance on the sequence and merging of these two influences.

In this development from mother-centered to father-centered attachment, and their eventual synthesis, lies the basis for mental health and the achievement of maturity. In the failure of this development lies the basic cause for neurosis.²⁴⁰

In all cases the hallmarks of real love are the desire to escape one's loneliness in a mature (*i.e.*, nonexploiting) union, coupled with the desire to enhance the welfare of the beloved primarily for his own sake. The theory, then, presented by Fromm is one in which, though acquisitive desires are present, benevolence is indispensable to love.²⁴¹

Fromm discusses not only the nature of love but also the question of how men can learn to love, or love better, than they do. He speaks of love as an art that men can practice or not, according to their own knowledge, decision, and powers. He, therefore, thinks of loving as, in some sense, voluntary, since it is something over which men can exercise some control, either directly or indirectly.²⁴²

Fromm makes the point about the voluntary character of love in his discussion of erotic love, a love generally thought to be the least voluntary: "Love is supposed to be the outcome of a spontaneous, emotional reaction, of suddenly being gripped by an irresistible feeling." If this view is taken, Fromm argues:

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, Sect. 2, p. 43.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 44. Filial love is dealt with briefly by Fromm. He does not seem to think that the infant is capable of real love before the age of eight-and-a-half to ten. At this point, however, a new factor enters the child's life. "For the first time, the child thinks of giving something to mother (or to father). . . . It takes many years from this first beginning to the maturing of love. Eventually the child, who may now be an adolescent, has overcome his egocentricity; the other person is not any more primarily a means to the satisfaction of his own needs. The needs of the other person are as important as his own—in fact, they have become more important." (*Ibid.*, p. 40.)

²⁴¹ There is also the element of knowledge. However, the theory presented by Fromm is primarily a tendential one.

²⁴² See *ibid.*, Ch. I, p. 5; and Ch. IV, p. 118.



One neglects to see an important factor in erotic love, that of *will*. To love somebody is not just a strong feeling—it is a decision, it is a judgment, it is a promise. If love were only a feeling, there would be no basis for the promise to love each other forever. A feeling comes and it may go. How can I judge that it will stay forever, when my act does not involve judgment and decision?²⁴³

Perhaps more decisive than the wilful act of love are the deliberate preparations a person can make enabling him to love better. Claiming that the ability to love depends on the development of a person, Fromm specifies the character traits love presupposes: discipline, concentration, patience, interest in mastering the art, the overcoming of narcissism, the cultivation of reason, the development of humility, faith in oneself, and courage.²⁴⁴ The cultivation of these traits enables a person to be actively concerned for others.

According to Fromm, the pressures of contemporary society make such traits increasingly difficult to acquire; hence, true love today is a rare and difficult achievement. More pointedly he argues that these pressures (particularly the economic ones) force individuals to develop acquisitive rather than benevolent habits, thus diminishing the incidence of love:

If our whole social and economic organization is based on each one seeking his own advantage, if it is governed by the principle of egotism tempered only by the ethical principle of fairness, how can one do business, how can one act within the framework of existing society and at the same time practice love?²⁴⁵

Fromm does not claim that the social and economic organization precludes love but only that it makes it more difficult. Men are still free to love if they decide to conduct their life, or some part of it, in opposition to contemporary currents. He argues, however, that, if love is to become a social rather than a highly individualistic phenomenon, "important and radical changes in our social structure are necessary."²⁴⁶

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, Ch. II, Sect. 3, p. 56. See also Ch. I, p. 4, where Fromm contrasts the experience of falling in love with the state of being in love.

²⁴⁴ See *ibid.*, Ch. IV, pp. 107–128.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 130–131.

²⁴⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 132.

9

Love and Judgment

IN this chapter we apply the cognitive or judgmental notions to three groups of theories. In the first and smallest of the three, love is conceived primarily in terms of the nontendential notions of esteem or valuation. In the second group, the judgmental notions in the sphere of cognition are conceived as an aspect of love. That is to say, love is understood as primarily tendential but as having an element of judgment in it. For the third and largest of the three groups of theories, the notions of esteem (as admiration or respect) and valuation are important for understanding how love emerges rather than for understanding what love is, since most authors conceive of love in the sphere of the tendential. The authors of these theories understand the cognitive elements as necessary or important conditions prior to love, as concomitant with love or as effects of love, but as separate from love itself.

The three parts of the chapter, corresponding to the three groups of theories, may be described as follows:

A. Love as Wholly or Primarily Judgment. The principal authors of these theories, presented here for the first time, are: René Descartes, David Hume, John Locke, Vladimir Solovyev, and Blaise Pascal.



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by
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This book is dedicated, with love,
to my entire family, especially to my aunt and guardian,
Katherine Helen Abdou, R.I.P.,
and to my brother, Samuel John Hazo