

Loving: A Developmental Challenge of Middle Age

GALEN SANFORD MARBURG

ABSTRACT: The capacity to love fully is one of the central developmental challenges of middle age. Loving is predicated upon the dynamic synthesis of trusting, autonomous, and creative relationships during childhood and adolescence. With the emergence of a productive orientation during middle age, it becomes increasingly clear that it is important to work for that which we love. It is impossible to encapsulate the essence of loving, but it can be partially delineated in terms of care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge. As a loving relationship develops, sexuality may emerge as another phase of mutuality. However, many loving relationships have no sexual overtones. In summary, loving is an end experience, for it engenders the joy that comes from being fully alive.

As loving is a basic orientation toward life itself, it is difficult to describe and understand. Many people believe that love can be confined to only one other person, but this misperception is based on only a partial understanding of what the process of loving really implies. A loving adult may develop one central and highly intimate relationship with another person which provides physical, economic, cognitive, and emotional continuity through time. In fact, this relationship may become so important that it becomes a part of their common existence; however, such a relationship inevitably has a profound impact on relationships with other individuals. Fromm observes:

If I truly love one person I love all persons, I love the world, I love life. If I can say to somebody else, "I love you," I must be able to say "I love in you everybody, I love through you the world, I love in you also myself."¹

Many people never know this type of relationship, for they believe that love means finding and then marrying a valuable partner, as determined by the current fads of the personality market. Although people in our society pride themselves upon having abandoned the idea that marriage should be a pre-arranged commercial transaction, "love" is still experienced as a commodity which is bought, sold, and advertised in the same way as other commodities.² Although some people call this love, it has little to do with love, for, at best, it is based on the mutual convenience of two people and, at worst, degenerates into sexual or other types of manipulation.

Most people in our society are much more concerned with being loved than loving others; thus, they try to get love from others through being successful, popular, or sexually appealing.³ Thus, some people attempt to find love through the accumulation of things and power, in the belief that this will make them more lovable to others. To some extent, they are right, for indeed, those

Galen Sanford Marburg, Ed.D., Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist with the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Northampton, Massachusetts.

who accumulate wealth and power are more attractive to many people. However, this has nothing to do with loving.

Others believe that loving involves making their bodies more attractive, and are concerned with having new clothes, keeping up with current fads, and using the latest cosmetic preparations to reduce all signs of individuality to a sterile, uniform, and predetermined image of beauty. Still others seek to be more lovable through gaining popularity, and concentrate on how to "win friends and influence people," in the belief that this will bring them closer to a "magic someone."

For an increasingly large number of adolescents, all of these ways of "loving" involve too much effort; as they only want to have a "good time," sheer sensuality is the answer. However, sexual relationships in which neither person cares about the other soon degenerate, become very unsatisfying, and even meaningless. All three of these desperate attempts to find love (through the search for success, popularity, or increased sex appeal) tend to isolate people from one another, and to fixate and fragment their personalities. Although these attitudes are consistent with some widespread beliefs, they are of little use in helping people understand the meaning of loving. The ability to love cannot be understood in terms of superficial external behavior, but must be viewed in terms of creating, understanding, and giving.

To love is to embark on an ongoing quest for the meaning of the moment, the meaning of interpersonal existence, and of life itself. Tagore conveys this feeling in the following poem:

The eternal Dream

is borne on the wings of ageless Light
that rends the veil of the vague and goes across Time weaving ceaseless
patterns of Being.

The mystery remains dumb,
the meaning of this pilgrimage,
the endless adventure of existence—
whose rush along the sky
flames up into innumerable rings of paths,
till at last knowledge gleams out from the dusk
in the infinity of human spirit,
and in that dim-lighted dawn
she speechlessly gazes through the break in the mist
at the vision of Life and Love
emerging from the tumult of profound pain and joy.⁴

Any quest requires courage to explore, to investigate, and to dare to reach towards another.⁵ To dare is to take a step that many find difficult, as did J. Alfred Prufrock, in the following poem by T. S. Eliot:

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.
And indeed there will be time
To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"

Time to turn back and descend the stair,
 With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—
 (They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!")
 My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,
 My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin—
 (They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!")
 Do I dare
 Disturb the universe?
 In a minute there is time
 For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.⁶

For Prufrock and many individuals in the modern world, the risk is too great, so they resign themselves instead to loneliness and alienation, by making decisions and revisions which are reversed a minute later. In daring, we must accept the risk of failure, for it is perhaps failure that is feared above all else. This fear must be conquered if we are to begin to love. Otherwise, "we are passing always passing, but never being."⁷ The existential reality is that we are born alone, die alone, and sometimes suffer from almost unbearable feelings of being separate and of not being able to communicate with another human being. Through loving others we can effectively bridge this chasm.

Earlier phases of loving

As in each of the other processes vital to the development of the healthy personality, the potential to be a fully loving person in middle age emerges from, and is deeply related to, a series of childhood and adult experiences. In a basically trusting relationship, the infant soon learns that he can count on harmoniously responsive relationships with the most significant others in his environment. Suttie states that "all good and human happiness depends upon personal relationships of a harmoniously responsive character, and . . . all evil and unhappiness spring from the inadequacy of these relations."⁸

As children's basic trust increases, they develop the potential to give, and to move out from the locus of their security system to explore autonomously the world in which they find themselves. In spite of popular myths that stress the dependent tendencies of people who love deeply, we can love only to the extent to which we have become autonomous and whole within ourselves.

The ability to love is predicated on becoming autonomous, which, in turn, is reflected by the degree of autonomy that was granted to children by the significant others in their social field. Many mothers are very loving in that they care for and are deeply concerned about their children as long as they are dependent upon them. They are satisfied to love, to give without the hope of getting, as they realize that caring for their child will enable him or her to grow into a man or a woman. The real test of a mother's ability to love, however, comes when the child begins to grow up, to become autonomous, and to explore the world, for then the loving mother must encourage her child to leave her gradually and become a unique person. It is possible to love children and

still want them to develop their own style, follow their own path, create their own destiny, and yet remain one with them—one with caring for them. In the loving relationship, both participants must be free to come together and to leave each other, if they are to explore fully the possibilities of life.

Motherly love for the growing child, love which wants nothing for oneself, is perhaps the most difficult form of love to be achieved, and all the more deceptive because of the ease with which a mother can love her small infant. But just because of this difficulty, 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. The woman who is not capable of love in this sense can be an affectionate mother as long as the child is small, but she cannot be a loving mother, the test of which is the willingness to bear separation—and even after the separation to go on loving.⁹

Coming and going does not preclude continuity on a day-by-day or week-by-week basis. However, this perspective does emphasize that loving implies a willingness to grant freedom to others. Gibran summarizes these ideas in the following passage:

You were born together, and together you shall
 be forevermore.
 You shall be together when the white wings of
 death scatter your days.
 Ay, you shall be together even in the silent memory of God.
 But let there be spaces in your togetherness.
 And let the winds of the heavens dance between you.
 Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping.
 For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.
 And stand together yet not too near together:
 For the pillars of the temple stand apart,
 And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow.¹⁰

Granting freedom to others is sometimes difficult. There seems to be a conflict between loving and becoming autonomous, for a loving person wants to participate fully in many of his beloved's activities.¹¹ However, in studies of psychologically healthy people, Maslow found that these individuals encourage their partners to be extremely autonomous, and yet maintain very warm and spontaneous relationships with them.¹² The earlier phases of loving are also deeply intertwined with creating, since loving involves exploring, tapping, and releasing the known as the continuous discovery of others and oneself goes on.

To love another fully, we must also have a meaningful *techné*. *Techné* is a Greek word that embraces the contemporary concepts of art, craft, and science. Thus, *techné* refers to the development of an ongoing occupational identity, in a meaningful and supportive social system. This approach to work or career fulfillment implies that one truly "loves that for which one labors, and one labors for that which one loves."¹³ Once again Gibran elucidates the vital relationship between love and work.



And what is it to work with love?

It is to weave the cloth with threads drawn from your heart, even as if your beloved were to wear that cloth.

It is to build a house with affection, even as if your beloved were to dwell in that house.

It is to sow seeds with tenderness and reap the harvest with joy, even as if your beloved were to eat the fruit.

It is to charge all things your fashion with a breath of your own spirit.¹⁴

In *techné*, as in loving, we must synthesize the two primary relationships identified by Buber.¹⁵ The I-It relationship is a fragmented one in which a person stands apart from the object or person he or she encounters; he or she looks at, observes, organizes, and describes, but does not experience It or know It as a whole. Through applying the I-It relationship to the physical and social sciences, mankind has accumulated knowledge and corrected misinformation about the objective universe in which we live. In contrast, the I-Thou relationship is a complete relationship, permeated by the flow and flux of life encountering itself. In the I-Thou relationship others are experienced as part of the whole, as part of the whole of life in which all exist.

If I face a human being as my Thou, and say the primary word I-Thou to him, he is not a thing among things, and does not consist of things.

This human being is not He or She, bounded from every other He and She, a specific point in space and time within the net of the world; nor is he a nature able to be experienced and described, a loose bundle of named qualities. But with no neighbour, and whole in himself, he is Thou and fills the heavens. This does not mean that nothing exists except himself. But all else lives in his light.¹⁶

Mature love is based on the development of both I-It and I-Thou relationships. Sometimes we must exist in an I-It relationship; we must stand apart, observe, try to understand and determine the consequences of our behavior. However, if we have only I-It relationships, we will never know the fullness of being—and being together—which occurs when we dare to flow, to meet, and to merge with the whole being of another, the whole of an object, or the essence of existence. "Without It man cannot live. But he who lives with It alone is not a man."¹⁷

The process of loving

Since mature love permeates a person's life-style, it is indistinguishable from everything else that he or she does. Thus, it is impossible to encapsulate the essence of loving (or any of the other processes that are related to the development of the healthy personality) in an analytical model. However, Fromm has tried to delineate the central characteristics of loving—that is, care, responsibility, respect, knowledge.¹⁸ We will consider each of these processes in turn.

1. *Care*. Care is the "act of concern for the life and the growth of that which

we love."¹⁹ If a mother cares for her child, she is concerned about its general welfare. Thus she is happy to feed it when it is hungry or bathe it when it is soiled. Caring is essential to the survival of the infant, since it is impossible for the human infant to provide for himself or herself. Care is the opposite of apathy, for it implies that we take something seriously, that "something does matter." Caring reaffirms the uniqueness of different individuals and societies and, in that way, reduces human alienation, at both the individual and social levels. Perhaps some day people will care about one another at least as much as they care for computer cards which bear the inscription, "Do not bend, fold, mutilate, or destroy."

2. *Responsibility*. We are responsible for ourselves, and to some extent for the fulfillment of the physical and psychological needs of others. In accepting responsibility for our existence, we affirm the capacity to respond to others. No one can live through other people, but in meeting and responding fully to others, we live with them, rather than merely next to them.

In an intimate relationship, it is possible to assess the quality of mutual caring by observing what happens to the dyad when one of the partners becomes ill.²⁰ If the relationship is a loving one, the altered responsibilities imposed by the illness are automatically assumed by the other. Thus, the person who is ill can relax in the care and concern of his or her partner, as the objective is to help facilitate recovery. However, if the partners do not have a loving relationship with each other, illness can be a time of tragedy. Men frequently define their relationships in terms of strength. When this is impaired, owing to illness or stress, the relationship may collapse. Similarly, when women become seriously ill, they may be paralyzed by the actual or feared loss of physical attractiveness.

The experience of a fully loving relationship with another human being has a benign effect on the entire psychological structure of the organism, for it generates a diffuse sense of well-being and inner certainty which cannot be obtained any other way. In addition, there is a sense of rightness and faith in the possibilities for mankind. This inner condition is reflected in our external appearance; when we experience joy, spontaneity, and love, energy and compassion radiate from our very being.

When I fall in love, I feel more valuable and I treat myself with more care. We have all observed the hesitant adolescent, uncertain of himself, who, when he or she falls in love, suddenly walks with a certain inner assuredness and confidence, a mien which seems to say, "You are looking at somebody now."²¹

3. *Respect*. This is the ability to affirm others as they truly are, and to encourage them to unfold in their own way.

I want the person to grow and unfold for his own sake, and in his own way, and not for the purpose of serving me. If I love the other person, I feel one with him or her, but with him "as he is," not as I need him to be as an object for my use.²²

In this way, other people are respected for what they are; there is no need to force them to adopt anyone else's perception or lifestyle. This is a *sine qua non* for open and full communication, that is, a precondition for mature loving.

4. **Knowledge.** Respect is possible only when there is knowledge. Knowledge implies that we understand why other people feel the way they do. This type of understanding is achieved through veridical or non-distorted perception of another person's behavior; however, observation and understanding of people's overt behavior must be complemented with the type of knowledge that comes through the ability to stand in their shoes and see the world through their eyes. Knowledge enhances our ability to love, for it enables us to understand another from the inside out, as well as from the outside in.

Cognitive knowledge can be acquired only through careful analytical study; once it is achieved, it serves as the basis for another type of knowledge. Knowledge through loving is the daring act of union with others in an attempt to understand their ultimate essence.

In the act of fusion, I know you, I know myself, I know everybody—and I "know" nothing. I know in the only way knowledge of that which is alive is possible for man—by experience of union—not by any knowledge that thought can give. . . .

The only way of full knowledge lies in the act of love; this act transcends thought, it transcends words. It is the daring plunge into the experience of union. However, knowledge in thought, that is psychological knowledge, is a necessary condition for full knowledge in the act of love.²³

Spontaneity and tenderness

Although these four interpersonal conditions are essential characteristics of loving, they do not entirely encapsulate its meaning, for loving also implies a spontaneous and tender orientation toward life itself. Spontaneity suggests that on at least some occasions we feel free to yield to our childlike qualities; at such times we can give in to and express what is happening to us moment by moment. Thus, we are free to be serious or intense, as well as tender and gentle. As we become involved in a loving relationship, we dare to be created, but we also dare to be destroyed, for in freely giving, we give our own vital essence to another.

Will this new relationship destroy us? When we love, we give up the center of ourselves. We are thrown from our previous state of existence into a void; and though we hope to attain a new world, a new existence, we can never be sure.

Nothing looks the same, and may well never look the same again. The world is annihilated; how can we know whether it will ever be built up again? We give, and give up, our own center; how shall we know that we will get it back? We wake up to find the whole world shaking; where or when will it come to rest.²⁴

As we become more spontaneous, we develop the capacity to abandon ourselves. All the familiar landmarks which have been charted throughout life, and the attendant security they provide, are abandoned as we are carried into the intensity of the being-in-the-now-together. This is one of the earlier phases of transcending, and as such provides a benchmark for the final stage of integration in the development of the healthy personality.

To love completely carries with it the threat of the annihilation of everything. This intensity of consciousness has something in common with the ecstasy of the mystic in his union with God: just as he can never be sure God is there, so love carries us to that intensity of consciousness in which we no longer have any guarantee of security.²⁵

Many psychologists, social scientists, and lay people believe that spontaneity is impossible. From a Freudian perspective, spontaneity is difficult to achieve. Some Christian theologians have historically maintained that spontaneity implies destructiveness, for they believe that people are basically depraved, and thus need to be consistently constrained by social sanctions.²⁶

However, many other authors, such as Fromm, Maslow, Suttie, and Watts,²⁷ believe that human personality is a coherent system whose intrinsic nature needs to be discovered and then experienced fully. In another manuscript²⁸ I have attempted to develop systematically the idea that personality is a coherent system, which has an incredibly diverse but highly integrated array of self-regulatory mechanisms. The survival of the organism through time requires the integration of a large number of diverse internal and external stimuli. The mere fact that a person can exist through time indicates that there are very strong, ongoing mechanisms which militate for integration; and, indeed, if these mechanisms were not present, it would not be possible for an organism to maintain essential stability throughout the life span. This self-organizing potential is evident in all healthy systems, and lies untapped behind all the facades and neuroses of the unhealthy personality.

In a loving relationship, we can behave spontaneously—that is, what we say, do, and feel emerges from our vital center. Even our weaknesses can be openly shared. Many individuals find it possible to become more spontaneous through psychotherapeutic intervention, for the skillful therapist engenders a dialogue that is free from the threat of judgmental evaluation. Thus, the effective psychotherapist listens without judging and condemning, as clients develop a deeper understanding of themselves.²⁹

More people find it difficult to express tenderness spontaneously, for here they encounter what Suttie has called the "tenderness taboo."³⁰ Tenderness plays an important, although much overlooked, role in human development. For instance, Sullivan believed that one of the best indicators of mental health



in later life was the presence of a chum during adolescence.³¹ The chum relationship facilitates personal integration through the exchange of feelings and thoughts within an interpersonal dyad that is characterized by warmth, acceptance, and gentleness.

The tenderness taboo applies to both men and women in Western culture. Most women are conditioned to be more concerned about personal appearance and sexuality than tenderness, while men are instilled with the idea that masculinity is a role characterized by toughness, aggressiveness, and hardness. Thus, both men and women avoid the expression of tenderness, or seem to be almost afraid of it. Tenderness is mistaken for sentimentality, as portrayed in Victorian novels such as *Sense and Sensibility*.³² However, genuine tenderness is free from hurry, anxiety, and the constriction of narrowly conceived goal directed activities.

Giving, receiving, and intentionality

Another important aspect of the art of loving is the ability to give and receive from others spontaneously. Authentic giving is an unconditional process, in that we neither expect nor ask for anything in return; yet we enable others to give of themselves, and thus experience the joy of participating in this ongoing process.

What does one person give to another? He gives of himself, of the most precious he has, he gives of his life. This does not necessarily mean that he sacrifices his life for the other—but that he gives him of that which is alive in him; he gives him of his joy, of his interest, of his understanding, of his knowledge, of his humor, of his sadness—of all expressions and manifestations of that which is alive in him. In thus giving of his life, he enriches the other person, he enhances the other's sense of aliveness by enhancing his own sense of aliveness. He does not give in order to receive; giving is in itself exquisite joy. But in giving he 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. Giving implies to make the other person a giver also and they both share in the joy of what they have brought to life. In the act of giving something is born, and both persons involved are grateful for the life that is born for both of them.³³

The mutual relationship that gradually emerges becomes one of the later phases of basic trusting, the prototype of which is the mothering one's unconditional offer to provide infants with the nourishment they need, so that they will grow and eventually become givers themselves.

The more people give of what they are, the more they achieve communion³⁴ or harmony with the essence of another. Thus, a central relationship is established in which people meet center-to-center or essence-to-essence, as opposed to a peripheral relationship, which is based only upon superficial mutuality. Loving, then, is a symbiotic process which facilitates the development of the healthy personality.

In order to give, there must be something within to give. If we feel that there is nothing within, we are unable to give to others; this is one of the tragedies of our times. However, people who give freely not only share what they have, but create within themselves a richer potential for giving in the future. Perhaps this is best conveyed by the poet Kahlil Gibran:

Love gives naught but itself and takes naught but from itself.
Love possesses not nor would it be possessed;
For love is sufficient unto love.³⁵

In order to give and to love, an individual must cultivate what Rollo May³⁶ calls intentionality, or the will to act. However, many people today feel they have no will, or, alternatively, that whatever they will doesn't make any difference, so they feel helpless. This feeling of general frustration, futility, and helplessness is not confined to one sphere of behavior, but frequently embraces everything a person tries to do.³⁷ Some people try to prove how helpless they are by citing the work of Sigmund Freud,³⁸ who postulated that people are driven by instinctual forces that are beyond their control. Some deterministic schools of psychology have contributed to the feeling of overwhelming helplessness that haunts mankind by claiming that people's behavior can be controlled if consistent reinforcement schedules are applied. For instance, B. F. Skinner claims that he can manipulate any type of behavior, if he can regulate reinforcement schedules.³⁹ The fact, however, is that at least to date behaviorists have been able to modify only specific behavioral patterns. It is my belief that the holistic functioning of personality will eventually indicate that this approach to behavior is counterproductive, for behavior is a complex process which is the result of a large and dynamic matrix of interacting systems.

Determinism in the psychological sphere has been reinforced by many socioeconomic theorists, beginning especially with the so-called classical economists, for example, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Adam Smith.⁴⁰ The theories and values advocated by these men diverge markedly on many issues; however, they share the belief that economic forces determine society and, to that extent, human behavior. The feeling of helplessness engendered by theories of psychological and economic determinism has been exacerbated by comparatively recent events. One decisive impetus occurred with the explosion of the atomic bomb, for it became evident to people everywhere that tremendously destructive energies could be released by powers beyond their control. A systematic review of the sophisticated devices in our military arsenals does raise the issue of whether or not life will continue on our planet. For many people, the net effect of these simultaneous developments is a diffuse feeling of impotence, pessimism, and resignation; they feel they have little influence on the future direction of their life and of their society.

Although the feeling of being manipulated, controlled, and powerless is quite common, individuals can develop the capacity to exercise their will, and thus elect to play a significant role in shaping their existence. "Will is the

capacity to organize one's self so that movement in a certain direction or toward a certain goal may take place."⁴¹ Without the ability to will, a person does not have the drive, the energy, and the momentum to create loving relationships with others. The capacity to will mobilizes energy which enables a person to shape and to structure meaning in his existence; this is intentionality.

By intentionality, I mean the structure which gives meaning to experience. It is not to be identified with intentions, but is the dimension which underlies them; it is man's capacity to have intentions. It is our imaginative participation in the coming day's possibilities . . . out of which comes the awareness of our capacity to form, to mold, to change ourselves and the day in relation to each other.⁴²

Loving and the emergence of sexuality

Giving, willing, and loving are interdependent processes which facilitate mutuality within an ever-widening radius of being. As a mature and loving relationship develops between two people, sexuality can (but by no means always) emerge as another phase of mutuality; or alternatively, sexuality can merely confirm isolation and alienation. However, many loving relationships between men and women have no sexual overtones. The point is that healthy sexuality emerges from mutuality, although mutuality does not necessarily imply sexuality. Even though sexuality is not an adequate basis for an enduring interpersonal relationship, it can enhance and be cultivated as part of a meaningful, expanding encounter, first with another human being, and subsequently with the universe as a whole. In some parts of the Orient, sexuality is, at least ideally, experienced as an art⁴³ or yoga⁴⁴ through which a person may achieve oneness, and thus is a way to liberation.

"In the embrace of his beloved a man forgets the whole world—everything both within and without. In the same way he who embraces the Self knows neither within nor without." The Hindu view of salvation being that of the union of the individual soul with the universal, the utter merging of one in the other, the union of man and woman in which the duality is lost becomes in the Hindu view the perfect symbol of liberation.⁴⁵

Sexual relationships that grow out of and are accompanied by tenderness can be a reciprocal and deeply meaningful experience. Thus a sexual experience will foster mutuality to the degree to which mutuality permeates most of the other phases of the relationship; however, if the relationship is essentially a competitive or unhealthy one, sexuality will be interpreted in a similar way, that is, as seducing or being seduced, using or being used. When sexuality becomes part of a relationship in which there has been a sincere and devoted effort to promote the growth and understanding of each person, then "it is . . . absurd to consider who gives and who gets, or who gains and who loses in the sexual act."⁴⁶ The healthy sexual relationship is characterized by

openness and expansiveness, rather than grasping or taking. It is a flowing, spontaneous, and mutually desired event; however, this same event becomes degrading and disgusting when forced or demanded in an exploitative, self-centered way.⁴⁷ In a loving relationship, sexuality happens of itself as each partner lets go, and is consequently open and responsive to the other; they flow together through the warmth and tenderness of both; whatever happens spontaneously is all that needs to happen.

In order to create this type of relationship, both people must have enough time in their lives "to let things happen"; they cannot be frantically rushing from one sexual encounter to the next, or from one sexual experience to their business, to a party, to home, etc. Although external time may be measured in minutes, inner time is related to grace and ease, for, in the healthy sexual relationship, each person must have time to enter into the world of the other, to respond, and to be with the other person. In the fully flowing and mature sexual experience, we give up ourselves, our personality, our defenses, and all that we are, and in giving completely are wholly received by the other.

Sexuality, when integrated with an essentially loving attitude, can provide experiential continuity throughout adulthood, and even old age.⁴⁸ Maslow's study of self-actualizing people empirically verified many of these ideas, for he found that the quality of sexual satisfaction between husband and wife actually improved with time, and, furthermore, that the desire for novel sexual partners is attractive to neurotic, but not healthy, people.⁴⁹ Maslow concluded that healthy people enjoy sex more than the average person, yet generally consider it less important. This apparent paradox can be resolved by an analogy between sexuality and food. Healthy people really enjoy and delight in good food, but they also feel that, except for sustenance, food is relatively unimportant. By the same token, healthy people may not "need" sexuality, but they do enjoy it when it is accompanied by genuine and mutual affirmation.⁵⁰

Later phases of loving

The next stage of psychosocial development involves sharing and participating in an ever more inclusive sphere of being. As an individual enters old age, participation in a wider sphere of being can no longer be achieved through physical activity, for the body may begin to undergo stress in relation to aging. However, the mind and the ongoing integration of meanings can continue as we share with others, and subjectively resolve diverse and previously bewildering paradoxes. In sharing the essence of what we are, we offer others a profound opportunity to accept what they are, including their assets and their liabilities. Acceptance of ourselves generates its implicit corollary—acceptance of others.

Loving other people implies a willingness to let things happen in their own way and in their own time. This awareness helps establish a relationship with the universe that is based on wonder, awe, and appreciation. As such, it transcends the limitations of time. The Taoist concept of *wu-wei* summarizes these ideas, for it refers to a style of life that is characterized by noninterference with

the Tao, or course of nature.⁵¹ The Taoist learns to flow with the harmony and oneness of the universe, and, instead of being split by distinctions, categories, and misunderstandings, seeks wholeness and continuity through the unfolding moments of time.

The Great Tao flows everywhere,
 (Like a flood) it may go left or right.
 The myriad things derive their life from it,
 And it does not deny them.
 When its work is accomplished,
 It does not take possession.
 It clothes and feeds the myriad things,
 Yet does not claim them as its own.
 Often (regarded) without mind or passion,
 It may be considered small.
 Being the home of all things, yet claiming not,
 It may be considered great.
 Because to the end it does not claim greatness,
 Its greatness is achieved.⁵²

Attempts to control, grasp, and hold onto the familiar must be gradually relinquished to achieve this state of awareness. During the psychotherapeutic process, the therapist enables the patient to discover that his or her endless, vicious circles and double binds can give way to an inner self which is coherent, and free of rigidity and closure.⁵³

Maslow refers to these experiences as end experiences, since awe before the beautiful is its own reward.⁵⁴ Through tenderness and compassion, an easy mutuality emerges; this is the joy of loving.

Admiration asks for nothing and gets nothing. It is purposeless and useless. It is more passive than active and comes close to simple receiving in the naive-realistic sense. The awed perceiver does little or nothing to the experience; rather it does something to him. He watches and stares with the innocent eye, like a child who neither agrees nor disagrees, approves or disapproves, but who, fascinated by the intrinsic attention-attracting quality of the experience, simply lets it come in and achieve its effects. The experience may be likened to the eager passivity with which we allow ourselves to be tumbled by waves just for the fun that is in it; or perhaps better, to the impersonal interest and awed, unprojecting appreciation of the slowly changing sunset. There is little we can inject into a sunset. In this sense we do not project ourselves into the experience or attempt to shape it as we do with the Rorschach. Nor is it a signal or symbol for anything: we have not been rewarded or associated into admiring it. It has nothing to do with milk, or food, or other body needs. We can enjoy a painting without wanting to own it, a rosebush without wanting to pluck from it, a pretty baby without wanting to kidnap it, a bird without wanting to cage it, and so also can one person admire and enjoy another in a non-doing or non-getting way.⁵⁵

Thus, loving gradually becomes associated with appreciation; appreciation for the joy that comes from being fully alive and having the opportunity to ex-

perience and create beauty in the universe. A similar experience is described in the following Chinese poem.

Let us live
 Among the white clouds and scarlet woodlands,
 Singing together
 Songs of the Great Peace.⁵⁶

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The Cultural Psychology of Kohut's Self Psychology

ROBERT L. RANDALL

ABSTRACT: Contrary to criticism, Heinz Kohut's self psychology does not support an absorption into self nor a morally neutral response to society. Kohut's psychology of the self and narcissism aims toward an analysis of contemporary Western culture that will restore it. In the process of assisting individuals and culture to recover from the vicissitudes of narcissism, Kohut has introduced a new type of cultural psychology, a "culture of empathy."

Although little has been written from the religious circle regarding Heinz Kohut's psychoanalytic psychology of the self, especially in the nature of critical analysis, there are religious commentators, along with sociologists and historians, who denounce all types of "self psychologies" for their presumed espousing and contribution to "cultural narcissism." Such self psychologies and psychologists supposedly support persons turning inward upon self needs, creating a "me-generation," rather than fostering an outward orientation toward responsible caring for others. In this form, psychology "has become more a sentiment than a science and is now part of the problem of modern life rather than part of its resolution."¹

Those commentators who make a full-scale criticism of "cultural narcissism," and who attribute its mobilization to the new self psychologies, fail to realize that Kohut's psychology of the self does not support an absorption into self nor even a morally neutral response to society. Kohut would consider an individual so self-absorbed and resistive to cultural commitment and responsibility as one suffering from some narcissistic disorder. The restoration of the self and of culture, Kohut holds, lies beyond a repudiation of narcissism. Restoration eventuates through the development of "higher forms of narcissism," in which there is a transformation of narcissism's primitive forms. His clinical suggestions for transformation of personal and cultural expressions of unmodified narcissism, and of the disintegration products that result, entail a return to our own inner self where, by the slow working-through process called "transmuting internalization," the self expands into creative, empathic, wisdom-endowed forms. Such a proposal, of course, elicits criticism of cultural neglect and insensitivity. Nothing could be further from the case. Kohut was convinced that wholesome psychological development via

The Reverend Robert L. Randall, Ph.D., is Minister of Counseling Services at St. Peter's United Church of Christ in Elmhurst, Illinois.



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