

## ON HUMAN LOVE...

The Fates' tapestry-making, through opportune weavings of the universe, has a way to interlace paths and encounters otherwise unlikely, allowing the random arrow of cupid's heartfelt dart to pierce that dolorous heart... and yet to *recognise* our feet's dance along a common path; our hearts resolutely echoing a glorious 'YES' of harmonious blissful joy; the light of wisdom's awakfulness to our inner silent scream assenting to the other, whilst simultaneously occupied with daily pains, chores and struggles, daily delights and divine hope flowing through our very veins...

Human love is complex, immanent and immediate.

## THE CONCEPT OF LOVE...

English, as is the case for many languages, has a paucity of words to express the complexities and varieties and depth of love. Ancient Greek, as an alternative example, has at least five words that encompasses love.

We can certainly, through context, even in English distinguish between various types of love: the love of parents for each child; of the love between siblings and family members; the love one has towards one's pet; the love enjoyed of a great book or film or conversation; and of course, the love expressed in the passion of love-making between lovers; amongst other and different examples that may yet be brought to conscious reflection. Here, to have various words to more immediately bring to the fore the various forms in which love finds expression seems, at least at times, desirable.

**agape** brings to the fore that 'universal' loving quality of unconditional love, of an outflowing that reaches to the very depth of the divine in the other - it is, in part, this quality and meaning that became stronger in the Late Antiquity Greek of the New Testament, modifying somewhat its Ancient Greek heritage.

**eros** highlights its foundational quality of unification, of union, of the fullness of empathy, with the between the lover and the beloved - hence its useful quality in its expression through erotic union. Yet its force in the mystical traditions is not to be overlooked, and many a saint has used this quality when speaking of divine union in blissful communion - St Theresa of Avila being but an example. In her case, there is little doubt that modern psychologists would only see in her descriptions a form of awakened sexual love - though her own writings seem to reflect a depth of intense 'romantic' longing and desire. Her experiences are profound divine encounters, her soul uniquely immersed fully in God's presence. As I mention in my book, 'Eros is passion-filled and "fierce and wild" (Cf Plato's *Phædrus*)'.

**philia** earlier referred more to the love between friends, a deep mutual respect and supportive engagement that remains, no matter what happens, what distinguishes mere acquaintances from true friendship when things become more difficult. It is also the suffix used in many words that describes a love for *things* in general: philo-sophy (love of wisdom); techno-phile (love of technology); philately (love of stamps); bibliophile (love of books) - amongst hundreds of other words. The term usually implies an affiliation or tendency towards, or even an affinity with, something or other.

**storge** in Ancient Greek referred 'simply' to familial love, often having elements of mutual obligations that one takes on willingly simply *because* the other is explicit or implied family (tribal associations included). It has a reminiscent quality to the Hebrew *Hesed* (usually translated as 'Mercy' or 'Loving-kindness') in its fuller sense (as used in the bible) to include reciprocal obligations - hence often translated as 'steadfast covenant' (or even simply as 'covenant' or 'fidelity').



## THE EXPERIENCE OF LOVE...

The *experience* of love is a unity, a wholesome holistic engagement of one being's flowing towards another. The experience, as opposed to the concept, is reminiscent of the distinction that especially McGilchrist paints in his major works, expressing the ways of the right (holistic) in contrast to that of the left (atomistic and analytical) hemispheres of the brain, impacting our ways of being and manner in which one sees the world. The experience of love brings meaning and hope and faith, we value truth, beauty and the good, and cherish the other's wisdom, sense of equity, inner strength and moderation.

The quivering flutters within the tummy (the Solar Plexus's (Manipura's) spontaneous activation, sometimes mixed with the Sacral Plexus's (Svadhithana's)) as one catches sight of the beloved who resides within the chambers of the heart - or even the thought of the sight: '*was it the beloved just now across the street?*'; the gonads' engaged response as the sweetness the beloved bears nears; the eyes' tintured alterations of the world with the mere conscious awareness of the beloved... To sustain this most wonderful of delights, often, in spiritual traditions, mixed with divine considerations, permits one to be present to the other, and even achieve the high mystical states described in spiritual journeys of the most profound nature.



Yet it is this experience of love, something to be totally cherished in its own right, that can also be the cause of suffering, with the atomistic left hemisphere intruding and breaking down, judging, and causing relations to be seen as bordering on the psychotic or as self-interested perversions. The cherished longing itself may bring an element of fear, of 'wanting' to step back, not allowing the depth presented to become fully real... in case (here the left brain can easily come up with innumerable reasonings, all, in themselves, faulty). To bring consciousness into our very bodies, into our heart, and allow our head to simply do what it is best at doing: simply reflect into awareness what is truly present.

## LOVE'S UNSPEAKABLE PAINS

Betrayal and treachery are the worst pains for love's gifted outpourings, of its unconditional flow and generous giving of itself. I am reminded especially of Caesar's expressed pain of betrayal by the hand of his trusted friend. Shakespeare captures it well, and has him exclaim, as the last dagger's blade pierces the bosom of Caesar's already dying flesh: *Et tu, Brutus?!* The tears can be felt even within the audience at the insurmountable pain of this treacherous act...

And what of Peter's diminished response to Christ's open question - usually translated without the force or the subtlety found in the Late Antiquity Greek original: *Do you love (agape) me Peter; Lord, you know I love (philia) you; Yet do you love (agape) me, Peter; Lord, you know that I love you (philia) you...* That depth of love given by Christ as his *new commandment* takes on a whole new depth: *Love me as I have loved you!*

Betrayal is well expressed by the card's complement: the *Maison Dieu* or 'Tower'. Here the utter destruction of the established home is experienced as an unmitigated assault from the netherworld. The 'undeserved' breakdown of heart and hearth, the shattering of all that is held as established and secure is felt by the brutal pain of the broken heart.

I am reminded of a reported statement by (from memory) Oscar Wilde, who mentioned that the accident he had with a bus in which he (supposedly) broke a leg was, in comparison, experienced with but little pain when compared to the mental agony of the pain endured during the depressive phase of grief and loss.

C.S. Lewis, in *The Problem of Pain*, reminds us that:

Mental pain is less dramatic than physical pain, but it is more common and also more hard to bear. The frequent attempt to conceal mental pain increases the burden.



And here, of course, the 'mental' includes the emotional, including the deepest pangs of the heart...

And yet... Love has hope and has faith as its supportive roots. Hope from the future calling and reaching forth its outstretched hand, faith in the depth that has already been experienced and grounded within the chambers of one's heart, in readiness for the new sprouting that each growth brings.



## TO CHOOSE WITH LOVE

In the Wirth deck and the tradition from which it draws, the fork upon the road reminds us that every step of the journey has decisions that need to be made, here depicted by the choice of two women - usually referred to as virtue and vice, or the temptations of pleasure compared to the narrow road of the development of inner virtue.

Certainly, as Oscar Wilde (again) was said to have said... 'I can resist everything except temptation' - and here 'temptation' is depicted in its carnal form. Something quite different to the sublimity of joining together of beloved to beloved. Each instance of our journey has a moral dimension...

In a way this has parallels with the description Tomberg gives for the capacity for moral insight to grow with our own growth, and of which Steiner speaks in his *Philosophy of Freedom* as 'ethical individualism', in which each instance has its ethical dimension, towards which, and out of which, we step into temptation or virtue.

## HOLY MATRIMONY...

Of human connections and 'contractual agreements', marriage is exemplary - classically the union of a man and a woman, with the intended purpose of bringing forth children within the union - or as expressed in the lyrics of 'Dance me to the End of Love', to dance 'to the children who are asking to be born'...

Marriage, in its archetypal form, deeply connects two individuals to mutually support one another over the changing conditions that life brings. This is the aspect that the Sefirah *Hesed* brings - often, as mentioned above, poorly translated as 'mercy', or better as 'loving-kindness', and better yet as 'covenant': a covenant made as mutually loving engagement from one to the other - a mutual deep respect filled with loving compassion and depth of love combining the concepts of *agape*, *philia*, *eros*, and *storge*.

And thus we are brought full circle to where we started, bringing us back to the fullness of love. As Tomberg writes in Letter 5 of *Meditations on the Tarot*: 'The heart lives only when it loves'... a love that simultaneously calls to mind T.S. Eliot's famous passage from *The Little Gidding*:

We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we began and to know the place for the first time

Where the 'place' is the heart fully living, blossoming with temperant *philia* for the other, deepened with the fiery force of *eros*, and oceanically flowing with the fortitude of *agape*.

