

Love You

Yes! Yes! A friend of mine, Alan Stewart, loved to recite from this poem by W. H. Auden:

*Some say love's a little boy
And some say it's a bird
Some say it makes the world go round
Some say that's absurd . . .*

Later on in the poet's delightfully forlorn attempt to narrow it down . . .

*Is it prickly to touch as a hedge is
Or soft as eiderdown fluff?
Is it sharp or quite smooth at the edges?
O tell me the truth about love . . .*

What is this thing called love? Cole Porter composed a jazz classic with that title; Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald and almost everyone else sang it; new songs, poems and books still use that phrase; so it seems that everybody wants to know. But nobody does. Isn't that beautiful?

Without mystery – the unknown – our minds would be bereft of beauty. Like life without a soul. The reason I write about the **mind** is that I had problems with it earlier in my life and, thankfully, I grew out of them by finding a certain blend of science (that was my bread and butter) and spirituality (my subjective experience of the unknown). I named part of my mind my **soul** because it was the only part that seemed to **know**, without fail, that I was **loved**. That knowing seemed to empower me to do things – basically, to **be and belong**, which I felt was both my primary purpose and the basic function of my mind. I don't always know for sure who I be and where I belong, but that idea gave me a small platform to talk about love. So I decided I would use my meagre knowledge of love to write about trying to live lovingly, while, at the same time, appreciating with awe the fact that I know so little about it.

Mind enables me to connect with everything in such a way that I can be myself. That is remarkable, anyway, but it cannot be achieved very well without love. It would either be all about me or all about me needing you (or my work, or my dog) whereas love precludes both of those attitudes. It accepts you and I as we are at this moment and values the **relationship** itself as a foundation for living – important enough to transcend our differences and heal any hurt that obstructs your path or mine. It occurs in the present. You have to offer it to someone or something so you can receive it. The more you give away the more you seem to have. So I offer it to the unknown to begin the day. That seems to help me work out how I should use my mind today.

Books? And teachers? They're everywhere. Take your pick. **The meaning you make of it yourself is all that matters.** How wonderful it is that we can meet in our minds so many outstanding human beings around the world who are teaching about love! My mind gets to meet up with an unassuming Vietnamese monk living in France called Thich Nhất Hạnh who has touched the hearts of millions of Westerners I should think. I understand he no longer speaks following a severe stroke, but more than a hundred books and recordings of his gentle, quite deep, voice still carry his thoughts and feelings. I've never met him nor heard him speak in person, but I love the internet for keeping me in touch.

In *The Art of Communicating* he wrote that ‘loneliness is the suffering of our time’ (and that is the subject of a future Blog). So the need to connect with one another is very great wherever you live or whatever you do. The first two of his six mantras of **loving speech** are ‘I am here for you’ and ‘I know you are there and I am happy about that.’ If there is some suffering that is evident to both of you the mantra is ‘I know you suffer and that is why I am here for you.’ In another situation the mantra is ‘I suffer, please help.’ The fifth mantra is ‘this is a happy moment’ and the sixth is an interesting one: ‘you are always partly right.’ Something to think about.

Like last week we are connecting with spiritual practices that are called Buddhist. The Western tradition of contemplation and spirituality seems to be neglected in the popular literature these days though I did come across a book called *How Dante Can Save Your Life* by Rod Dreber in which *The Divine Comedy* is played out in a modern setting. **Agape** is a much-used term of Greco-Christian origin for the highest form of love. *The Cloud of Unknowing*, written in Middle English by an unknown author in the 14th Century, has a superbly simple philosophy that I love. The spiritual exercises of St Ignatius are said to be for understanding about love.

It’s not for want of trying that science hasn’t revealed for us the nature of love. The most compelling and tidy theorem I know of is one that I’ve barely touched in my writing so far – the syntropy-entropy balance – as developed by Ulisse Di Corpo and Antonella Vannini in books such as *Syntropy - The Spirit of Love*. The scientific derivation of a force called **Syntropy** that coexists with the force of **Entropy** stems from an Italian mathematician Luigi Fantappiè around the early days of quantum wave theory. It shows that forward-in-time solutions (linear causes) and backward-in-time solutions (attractors) are equally valid. The latter have been neglected because our culture finds it difficult to accept causation coming from the future. Syntropy means that we are drawn towards higher development as well as towards physical dissipation; we can influence the balance between these two.

A Japanese spiritual leader called Ryuhō Okawa has a simple clear view of *The Origin of Love* that could almost be called universal because it is mimicked in so many other texts and belief systems. It is the desire to be **united** with our own source and with one another – to become one with ‘everything other’ which includes the unknown.

Our minds abound in **stories**. In fact they are the thread of meaning that holds our mind’s shape and structure in the form that works best for us. The late Diane Wolkstein was a great storyteller whom I did get to meet (thanks to Alan Stewart mentioned above) and she wrote ‘blessings on your love’ and other words in the front of her book when my wife and I purchased it in 1996. The book is called *The First Love Stories (from Isis and Osiris to Tristan and Iseult)* and I doubt there are many better descriptions of what love feels like than in that book. Robert Johnson used the story of Tristan and Iseult as a model for the spiritual aspect of love in his great book *We – Understanding the Psychology of Romantic Love*.

The latest version of love is called *Love 2.0* in a book of that name by Barbara Fredrickson – an endorphin-oxytocin-dopamine driven ‘**positivity resonance**’ that can happen to you with anyone at any time. I think it’s good that today’s social researchers value the idea of love as much as anyone ever did.