

(...) Based on different Greek words for love, there are at least five forms of love that can be distinguished: *epithumia*, *eros*, *philia*, *agapè* and *storchè*. For now I will translate them as 'lustful desire', 'enamoured love', 'loving attachment ...', 'being well pleased with somebody ...', and 'esteem'.

(...)

The sexuality of the *eros* must be sharply distinguished from the *epithumia*, since the former involves a substantial commitment to the beloved, whom is irreplaceable to the enamoured 'lover'. We find such a meaning of *eros* already in Plato's *Symposium*, namely in the story of Aristophanes in which the soul is looking for her better half. This directly indicates that this *eros* is not just about an oceanic fusion — because it can also occur in the lustfully sexuality, but about a communal ensoulment in which the lover wants to make himself 'whole' with his beloved. (...)

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(...) Socrates understood philosophising therefore as a *maieutics*, the art of the midwife, obstetrics, to give birth to the wisdom which is trapped in oneself. It is a disruptive and interfering transformation process of the soul which is always accompanied by pain and effort. (...)

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(...) I interpret the erotic ecstasy therefore not primarily in terms of the emotional experience, but on the basis of the amorous play itself. In the cosmic rhythm of erotic acts an interplay that has its own dynamics develops between lovers: 'it' is there. This 'it' points to the superindividual nature of their communal being which cannot be exacted; it can at the most be alluded to and responded to. It implies something like a mutual tact in which lovers are enraptured by each other. Though this 'it' indeed involves pleasure, it is more than that: *when the interplay takes place between them, it is a total self-reinforcing movement of their communal being itself*. Therefore the amorous play is often seen as a cosmic dance.

(...)

Therein desire, feeling, sensuality and thinking interact in a mutually reinforcing way and in this sense the whole inner life comes into play. Head and heart, belly and mouth combine. (...)

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(...) Exactly because of this desire for community and flourishing the *eros* has a clear significance in the historical dynamic of life. That is also evident in the experience of falling in love, which teaches us a lot about *eros*. In the erotic experience the desire for the beloved is of such a nature that one is wrenched from his familiar life and loses his heart to the other, but this loss is simultaneously a giving of oneself to *the beloved*. My old life is over, a new life announces itself, with all the unavoidable expectations and illusions that come with it.

With the fulfilment of the erotic desire communion is effectively established. Someone finds oneself in and through the other. (...)

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(...) However, the erotic relationship eventually often requires a certain skill and yes, also love, to seduce the beloved. Here we touch the eroticism as art. In my book I demonstrate 'psycho-techniques' which foster this liberating interplay: discipline, concentration, attention and creativity.

They are, by the way, important for all of our creations. The discipline and thinking do not stand alongside or in opposition to the sensuality and feeling, but manifest as a refinement, absorption, enrichment and intensification of them. (...)

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(...) It is my understanding that eroticism is a form of *intensification of sexuality* which comprises devotion, transformation, connection and the flourishing of our being.

(...)

The flowering of the beloved at which the eroticism is directed, essentially concerns his or her integral or 'holy' *beauty*; and it is this beautiful presence of the beloved which the lover loves and thus in which he finds his pleasure. He sees the beauty in the other, lets him feel it and reveals it. It is not so much about an aesthetic beauty, but about the free beauty of the integrated soul itself, which is physically brought to life in communion with the beloved. The transformative liberation to these creative and playful beauty is then simultaneously a cleaning or purification — a *catharsis*. (...)

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(...) It is in any case about a form of discipline, concentration, attention and creativity which someone gives from oneself to the beloved. One's own healing is necessary to the healing of others. And so it is also essential that the pleasure is not demanded of the beloved, but that one's own capability to enjoy is given to the beloved: the sacrifice of love as a gift. (...)

Ad Verbrugge

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*Staat van verwarring. Het offer van liefde*, Amsterdam, Boom, 2013