

# LOVE

A guide for amateurs



*SurvivingWork*

FREUD MUSEUM  
LONDON

# LOVE:

A GUIDE FOR AMATEURS

THIS EBOOK HAS BEEN PRODUCED BY THE FREUD MUSEUM LONDON TO EXPLORE OUR COLLECTIVE CAPACITY FOR LOVE. IT IS PART OF A SERIES OF EVENTS ON THE THEME OF FREUD AND LOVE.

*Freud & Eros: Love, Lust and Longing* is a new exhibition at the Freud Museum London, running from 22 October 2014 – 8 March 2015. The exhibition looks at Sigmund Freud's revolutionary ideas on love and the libidinal drive through Freud's own art collection and his passionate courtship of his wife Martha Bernays. Themes of love and longing are further explored in works by contemporary artists Jodie Carey, Hannah Collins, Rachel Kneebone and Edmund de Waal.

The exhibition is accompanied by an exciting programme of talks, performance, classes and events, including this ebook, event and conference.

From January 2015 we will be asking you what you know about love - from how to get on with your family to how to turn your office into a love grotto. You are cordially invited to join us on this journey which we are calling #LoveAmateurs on [@survivingwk](#) and [our website](#).

This will culminate in an event at the Freud Museum in London when a group of bonafide love amateurs will be fumbling around for some ideas about love.

To join us at *Love: A Guide for Amateurs* on the 13th February 2015 please go to [The Freud Museum London](#).

To book a place at the Freud Museum's conference on *Love, Lust and Longing* on the 14th February 2015 please go to [the event's page](#).

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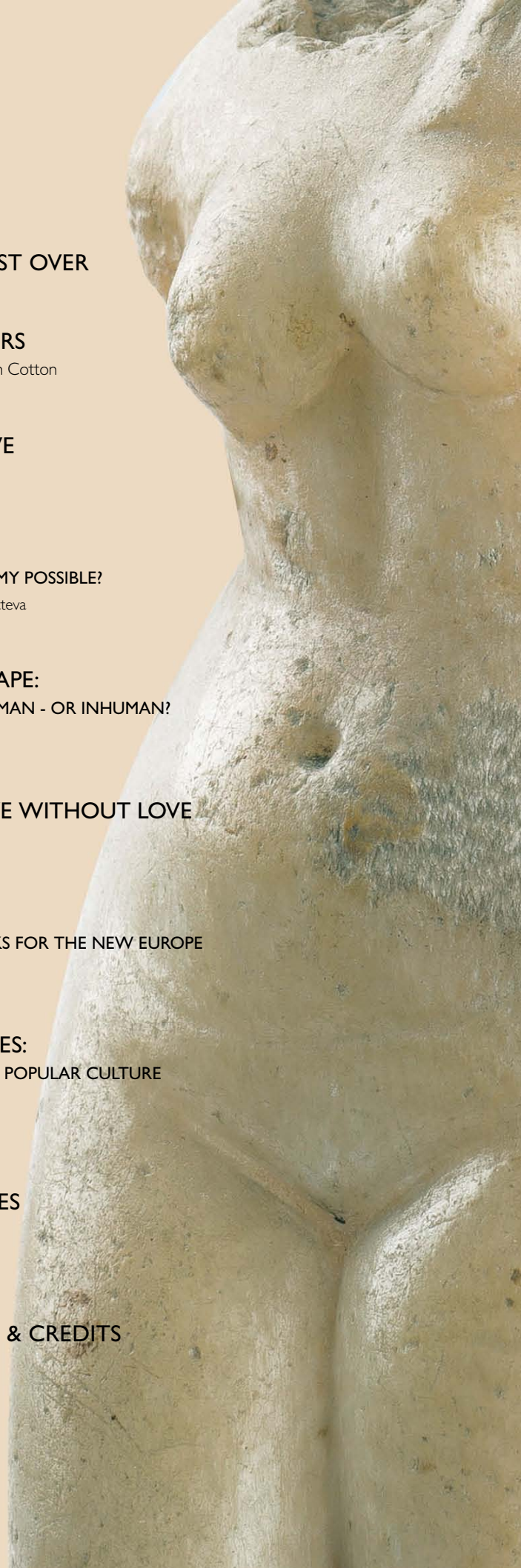
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Elizabeth Cotton is a Senior Lecturer at Middlesex University Business School. Her academic background is in political philosophy and current writing includes precarious work and employment relations, activism and mental health at work. She has worked as an activist and educator in over thirty countries, working with trade unions and Global Union Federations at senior level. Some of this work is reflected in her co-authored publication, *Global Unions Global Business*, described as “the essential guide to global trade unionism”. Elizabeth lived and worked abroad until returning to the UK in 2007 to write and start the process of training in adult psychotherapy. She is founding director of The Resilience Space and runs the Surviving Work Library [www.survivingwork.org](http://www.survivingwork.org) a free online resource on how to actually do it.

# #LOVEAMATEURS: AN INTRODUCTION

BY ELIZABETH COTTON

There's nothing quite like thinking about love to make you feel like a teenager. Monosyllables, arm crossing and huffs.

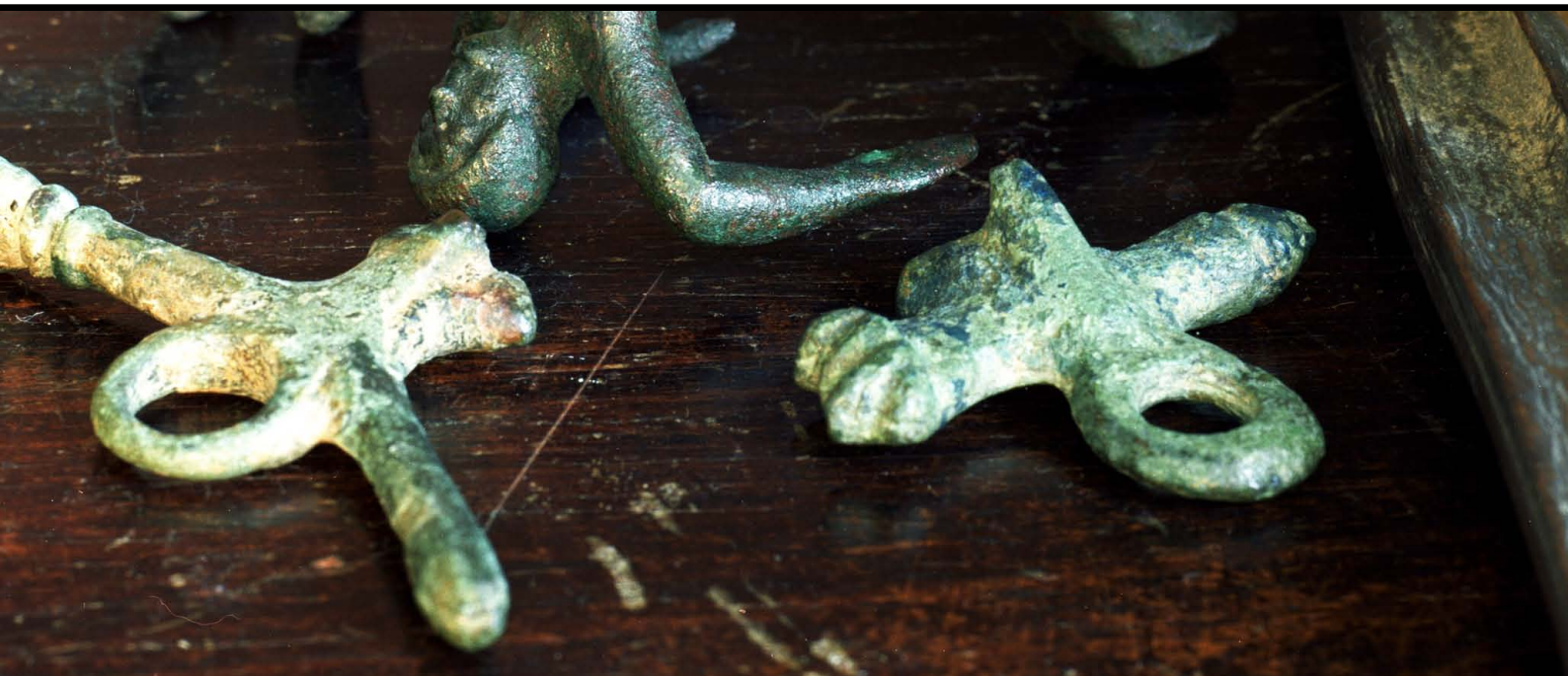
But before we give up on love it might be helpful to know that we're all ultimately love amateurs. Read a love letter between Freud and his fiancé Martha, full of silliness and desire, and you might realise that even for the father of psychoanalysis putting love into words is really hard.

One of the motivations to learn about love is the desire to circumnavigate the inherent perils and pains of getting close to people. From how to love the person you're having sex with to getting on with people at work, we all get to wonder if we'll ever get better at love.

One attempt to do this is to make love manageable by carving it up into simple parts. Neatifying love to explain our end-in-tears attempts to merge and transcend the hard graft of loving people who are not the same as us.

Greek philosophy gets enlisted because it offers nice neat categories. Love split into four parts - Eros, Agape, Philia and their dull cousin Storge. Plato's preoccupation with striking a balance between the sexual passion of Eros and the caring love of Agape. The friendly love of Philia and the begrudging family loyalty of Storge underplayed in the endless philosophical dissection of the ingredients of what Irving Singer calls this troublesome 'large-scale term'.

Plato saw love as a developmental process, advocating promiscuity to discover that the objects of sexual activity are in fact alike, liberating us to move swiftly on to loving a specific person and ultimately the 'good'. Our loving journey to culminate in something like god, a truth or a cause worth dying for.



This looks pretty attractive when you place it next to an Sartre's Existential version of love where relationships are based on the desire to possess an ideal. The suffocating experience of the desire for a total merging combined with categorical longing for our total freedom. Love me love me not. Other people, ewwwwwwgghhhh.

The value of philosophical ideas about love depends on what we think the philosopher's job might be. To solve The Problem of Love or just to try to understand aspects of it. An implicit fault line of philosophical and psychoanalytic traditions, that by understanding the world we find our place in it and relationships with the people that share it.

Another way to manage the anxiety of intimacy is to downgrade love to pure sexual desire, a chemical imbalance that happens when sufficient levels of oestrogen meet testosterone. A pinch of dopamine, oxytocin and serotonin to spice it up a bit and fuel the billion dollar business of chemical compatibility.

This position on love often enlists neurological research on our mental hardwiring and the seven instinctual systems we share. The 'seeking' system a familiar one to those of us who have been speed dating. The wanting that propels us out of the house to find our true loves, but ending in an existential itch that cannot be scratched. Tucked away in the central amygdala is the instinctual system of fear, an innate response to things that are unknown or not under our control, including those tall-dark-and-handsomes.

The field of neurology certainly gives us a framework for understanding some things about love - as well as a slap on the wrist for attempting to rise above our ape shaped beginnings. But even biological determinists recognise that what distinguishes us from chimps are our prefrontal lobes which can override this instinctual hardwiring. The part of the brain that can inhibit us, hold us back and help us to think about consequences and each other.

Socratic as it might be, this capacity to be conscious of the self and the other is not the stuff of matchme.com, rather the ordinary magic of love.

A love-lite that gives sexual desire primary place is often attributed to Freud who coolly observed the workings of the libido and sexuality in infant development. Although sex is indeed massive in psychoanalysis, this simple view slips over Freud's major contribution to understanding human life through our attachments to the people around us. Object relations, exploring the role of early care givers in determining how we love propelling us far from the first date stuff of tell-me-about-your-childhood and right bang into the blood and guts of the Oedipus complex. Freud's labours are not for the sexually faint-hearted, exploring the profound programming of sexual desire and a dynamic view of love as a way of relating shaped by early and unconscious experience.

The psychoanalyst Robert Money-Kyrle defined the basic facts of life saying that we're all dependent on other people for survival, we are not the centre of the entire universe and can be excluded from things, and we all die. In a recession we shouldn't need reminding of the fact that relationships with other people are important but there is something strangely difficult about admitting that we have to learn to love under imperfect conditions.

Sadly romantic ideas about love conquering all are tested in the extreme during economic crisis. Feelings get stirred up often rather ugly ones like irritation, anger and loss of sexual desire. Relationships at home and work break down not just because of hard financial realities but facing our psychic realities when the honeymoon ends.

Often our response to anxiety is to create some psychic benzos, resulting in a numbing and a retreat from others. Whether its a penchant for porn or compulsive online flirting, many of us play at intimacy from the safety of our front rooms. Alone. The socially acceptable veneer of casual sexual contact but actually living in what John Steiner describes as a psychic bunker, cutting us off from the possibility of actual bonafide relationships.

This next bit is a bit bleak.

The desire for someone else rests on the extremely high likelihood that we are not perfect combined with the seduction of becoming so by joining up with someone who, in our minds, is. In the words of George Bernard Shaw, love involves over-estimating the differences between one man and another. Intoxicating-crazy-in-love type situation where we all get to be Beyonce or Elvis pre-peanut-butter-meets-bacon.

Love raises the problem of perfection, when our narcissistic nerves get tweaked by the realisation that we are not complete without an imperfect other. Being faithful to our own imagined omnipotence or the phantasy of perfection comes at the expense of living in the real world where we are dependent on the love of other people and, if you want to get hippy about it, a benevolent universe.

Retreating from intimacy is a major missed opportunity for being the best version of ourselves. Agreeably its a humanistic position that kicks the hell out of romance, less loves-young-dream and more making-the-best-of-a-bad-lot. A psychoanalytic balloon popping, what Yalom famously calls Love's Executioner, but with this a realistic shot at love.

If you are struggling to love and you feel like packing your psychic bags, just don't. Instead, take the time to learn from other amateurs about how to love.





# CREATIVE LOVE

BY DAVID MORGAN

It is often posited wrongly that psychoanalysis is a closed system. Like any theory or process it can be used that way but at its best it is a way of exploring the closed systems or defences that we all create, including psychoanalysts, to manage the uncertainties of life, such as the problems with love, dependency, life and it's unfortunate corollary death.

The most helpful analytic attitude is most like Keats description of a creative state of mind.

“The concept of Negative Capability is the ability to contemplate the world without the desire to try and reconcile contradictory aspects or fit it into closed and rational systems.”

Nothing is more contradictory than the love of another and their difference. A loving deep engagement between sentient beings seems to be both the sole purpose of life in an otherwise inanimate universe and it's most difficult task.

Live company can expose us to an awareness of our vulnerability, dependence and finitude, in a way that other more distracted less personal ways of life do not. To be open to another is not easy and we are always in danger of being forced into a closed system.

Such as narcissism , addictions, materialism, power, religious or secular fundamentalism which seek to avoid these conflictual facts of life, they attempt to provide certainty, whilst a relationship with the other confronts us with our own uncertainty like a mirror to ourselves.

We all may prefer a less accurate reflection and seek to dilute the depth of involvement with the other and therefore our self awareness, through these more superficial involvements

This dilution and distraction distorts and refracts the experience of knowing and being known.

This avoidance in the other can be a lifelong aim like a phobic avoidance of the intensity of the other and ourselves.

Keats longed to find beauty in a sometimes painful world. In a letter to his brother he said 'when man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.' Then this is when creativity can emerge.

This description can be compared to a definition of conflict:

'An emotional state characterized by indecision, restlessness, uncertainty and tension resulting from incompatible inner needs or drives of comparable intensity.'

Conflict therefore sounds like a negative state with little hope of resolution. However, Keats' creative concept seems positive and full of potential by leaving out 'restlessness' by avoiding an 'irritable reaching after fact and reason'

In order to be creative true and I would say in order to engage with another, one has to be able to remain in what may be states of conflict without 'irritably' reaching after facts or reasons to reduce the uncertainties of living.

By not imposing one self upon the doubts and uncertainties which make up a conflict, Keats, like a good analyst, would rather we were open or agape to the experience.

Doubt is of course ubiquitous, and is often seen as negative, to be uncertain seen as a weakness, like 'Doubting Thomas', challenging blind faith and fundamentalist thinking, (perhaps he should have had a religion of his own? Or is that science?), the word doubt actually originates from the Latin word 'dubitare' meaning 'two' as in two minds.

In relationships two people (i.e. two minds) with all the uncertainty that this stirs up it can create opposition with the other, Keats and psychoanalysis attempt to help people finds this situation to be one that is open for creativity allowing love of the other in all their difference to transcend the need for certainty.



# LOVE: IS A MORE HUMANE ECONOMY POSSIBLE?

MATT GIEVE AND MILENA STATEVA

This blog is an offering of thoughts on love in an attempt to capture the essence of a series of conversations between the two of us. In starting these conversations, we arrived at a shared anxiety, a fear that we might display a misunderstanding of love - to show ourselves, in some sense, 'not to get it'.

Perhaps all intellectual endeavours looking at the concept of love face this risk - for love

occupies an unparalleled position in our culture, being often seen as the ultimate and highest value. Even to ask what it is seems a kind of heresy, after all should we not already know?

This is close to another set of anxieties in writing about love – the fear of explaining it away, the fear of naming experiences that are not to be spoken about, but to be lived and to remain in intimate spaces between those who experience them.

As Arendt says (*The Human Condition*), the thought's quest is itself a kind of desirous love where the objects of thought can only be loveable things. It is in such a quest that we have both input equally and have made some compromise.

## LOVE AS SHELTER FROM THE STORM

The romantic love relationship today demands from those in a couple to be everything to each other - lover, friend, intellectual counterpart, soul mate, priest or therapist, business partner, parent and so on. And many have argued that capitalism shapes contemporary love relationships, with new societal pressures charging love with new functions (Weeks, *The Problem with Work*).

At the same time, as state, church and civil society withdraw not only from the private



but also the public sphere, greater demands fall directly on already pressed individuals in this context of vanishing containers.

Seemingly to support people in these roles, romantic holidays and dinners are sold to lovers as the special 'spacetime' booked for love; bedrooms, kitchens, living rooms, cars and picnic equipment are advertised as the enablers of love and our capacity to do love is increasingly questioned by a new age love coaching industry.

Rather than taking this at face value, Featherstone's *Love and Eroticism* warns that love in late capitalism may turn into a defensive unit, a 'battery-charging compartment' and a specific 'socio-erotic sphere' in our busy lives. The end of love as 'being towards' the other, the ordinary kindness and generosity of everyday life.

Three centuries after Leibniz (*Theodicy*), the theodicy question remains: are there ways to keep the Soul intact when Reason has replaced God and Profit has replaced Reason?

## LOVE AS THE BASIS OF AN ALTERNATIVE ECONOMY

Not only do societal pressures place changing demands on love but they also shape the available discourses for its understanding. The powerful metaphors of debt and quantity frame our contemporary social condition.

The unvoiced questions of this discourse become: Is love the possession of the individual to spend on this or that person, in this or that sphere? Love as a currency that once spent is diminished. Or does this metaphor misunderstand the substance of love?

Graeber (*Debt*) argues, 'there is no better way to justify relations founded on violence, to make such relations seem moral, than by framing them in the language of debt'.

This view of the social world as a system of economic exchanges shapes love relationships and sets them up as reciprocal arrangements, often sealed off with wedding contracts in which each party gives in order to receive. Debt is a wider metaphor that shapes, via the social unconscious, the experiences at all layers of the contemporary world. As Graeber (*ibid*) says, 'the very fact that we do not know what debt is, the very flexibility of the concept, is the source of its power'.

A closer look shows that the metaphor of debt, pervasive in social relations, is insufficient in an economics of love. To put it bluntly: debt is the wrong metaphor.

In developing his theory of love, Fromm (*The Art of Loving*) observed that 'love is primarily giving, not receiving' and that:

"The most widespread misunderstanding is that which assumes that giving is "giving up" something, being deprived of, sacrificing. [...] The marketing character is willing to give, but only in exchange for receiving; giving without receiving for him is being cheated. People

whose main orientation is a non-productive one feel giving as an impoverishment.”(Fromm, 1956: 18)

This seeming paradox lies at the heart of the melancholic’s predicament; that they are depleted by their own selfishness. In feeling that their precious store of love must not be squandered on another but instead invested in their own impoverished self, the melancholic fails to realise that this cycle of giving only to receive is in fact the cause of that impoverishment.

Love as generosity can open the doors to an alternative economy to reframe the contemporary social condition. Grosz (*Time Travels*) draws on Derrida and Levinas to suggest a possibility of an alternative economy, and therefore an alternative morality – one that can take us out of the economy of debt, violence and force. She looks at the gift as a key to thinking beyond debt into the realm of ‘hospitality, donation, generosity and ethics’:

‘The gift is both a part of and in some sense always beyond the economy of exchange, that economy that measures, regulates, calculates only through a kind of primary violence. The gift and the modes of hospitality that it entails, is an impossible (yet imperative) relation in which what is given cannot be what it is: the gift can only function in not being a gift. The moment an impulse to reciprocity or exchange is set up (one gift for another), the gift ceases to be a gift and becomes an object of in a system of barter or exchange.’ (ibid)

The idea of an alternative economy based on gift rather than debt lays the foundations for an ontology based on ethics that is driven by love which is based on responsibility towards the Other: ‘My responsibility to the Other does not reciprocate to his or her responsibility to me’, says Levinas (*Existence and Existents*). This implies that it is precisely in a context based on the metaphor of gift rather than currency and reciprocity that love can exist - or else becomes something else. Love for Levinas ‘is not a possibility, is not due to our initiative, is without reason; it invades and wounds us, and nevertheless the I survives in it’.

This brings us back to Fromm, who emphasises that love as giving is not a sacrifice and not sufferance as the more love one gives, the more enriched they are. Love for both Fromm and Levinas is at the core of being human, a responsibility to (and recognition of) the ‘unique one’ - hence there can be no prescriptions for what love is and how it can or should be done.

Nevertheless, how and why we think of love can have powerful effects on our being in the world, on how we act, how we relate and how we impact the social world around us. Our metaphors of love as an alternative to debt perhaps are at the core of what enables us to constantly re-appropriate spaces, symbols, metaphors and behaviours hijacked by processes that attack linking. How industries work to exploit St Valentine’s Day and Christmas (among many) and how people somehow manage to keep the original spirit and purpose of these spaces may be a way to think of a gift-based economy with hope.



# FREUD AND AGAPE: TOWARDS A LOVE THAT IS TRANSHUMAN - OR INHUMAN?

BY STEVE FULLER

Agape is the form of love - often seen as distinctly Christian - which one has toward the other because one sees something 'common' with the other that transcends matters of individual self-interest. It is grounded in neither utility nor impulse. At the same time, Agape keeps open whether the relevant commonality is grounded in a common habitat or in some deeper sense of our being the same thing, perhaps even sharing a common (divine) origin. Today's secular world favours the former option. Thus, Agape is reduced to bonds of sympathy that may, indeed, extend across species boundaries, as we come to realize that our own existence depends 'ecologically' on those quite radically different from us. This move is best seen as a naturalization of Agape, a soft landing for a theological idea in a world increasingly veering toward atheism. Readers of Alasdair MacIntyre's *Dependent Rational Animals* or Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* will know what I mean.

Freud, to his credit, was not so easily fooled - but that does not mean that he let Agape off the hook. On the contrary, In *Civilization and Its Discontents* he is quite scathing about what is entailed by the second, stronger interpretation of Agape, which he held to be truer to its original Christian spirit. Freud focused on what he regarded as its secular second coming, Soviet Communism. Seen through that lens, Agape's commitment to a 'universal brotherhood of man' appears to offer little more than carte blanche for the commission of violence in the name of 'unconditional love'. After all, the lover who continues to give while remaining closed to the gift of the other would seem to be, by definition, insensitive to suffering - not of the other but also of oneself. Yet, is this lack of reciprocity not entailed by the very idea of 'unconditional love'? Freud clearly thought so, and his argument was helped by the Soviet abolition of private property. While presented as a moment in the process of human emancipation from the tyranny of self-interest, it led to the demonization - if not death -- of those who refused to cede their land to the state.



One thing is clear: The Indo-European languages, past or present, are not especially good at distinguishing the kinds of 'love', ranging from Eros to what is of concern here, Agape. St Augustine had already observed this as a feature of the Bible. However, he put on a brave hermeneutical face, arguing that the sort of love God wants us to have is a rather complex thing. For this purpose he introduced *caritas* ('charity') to capture, on the one hand, the spontaneous affection toward someone implied in erotic love and, on the other, the high-minded, more principled attitude implied in agapic love. Thus, Augustine interpreted the classic agapic parable of the Good Samaritan in terms of the do-gooder seeing in the robbery victim someone attractive, the saviour of his own sins – Jesus, understood as the universal human yet also the Son of God. On this basis, the Roman Catholic Church has consistently upheld charity as the truest form of love.

In contrast, Protestants have generally favoured a stricter definition of Agape. They note that the victim in the Good Samaritan tale lies in a treacherous area, where it was reasonable to conclude that the victim himself may be a robber in disguise. Moreover, the victim may have been a Jew, a natural enemy of the Samaritan. All of this explains why this particular Samaritan's act seemed so distinctive – everyone else had avoided the victim. In this reading, the do-gooder must overcome his own sense of fear and even hatred. Martin Luther King was clear that this sense of Agape governed the 'love thine enemy' ethic behind his policy of civil disobedience to fight racism in the American South. It required a sharpening, not a blurring, of the divide between Eros and Agape. King's theological benchmark was the two-volume *Agape and Eros* published by the Swedish Lutheran, Anders Nygren in the 1930s. Nygren identified the magnanimity of Agape with God's spontaneous disgust at our fallen state, which then makes his love for us a triumph of will over sentiment: We are loved in spite of ourselves.

The larger lesson here is that agapic love requires removing the narrow sense of self-regard that led those other travellers to avoid the victim altogether as posing too much of a personal risk. But this is less a matter of failing to put oneself in the other's shoes -- thereby revealing one's own sense of vulnerability – that failing to see the victim as the sort of being whose life one inherently values – perhaps even as a version of oneself. If this prospect seems arrogant and/or narcissistic, and it is certainly the aspect of Agape that most bothered Freud, it is nevertheless the one with the strongest theological grounding: namely, that each of us is created 'in the image and likeness of God'. In that case, the Good Samaritan sees in the victim the divine signature just as he does in himself. Both are autonomous creative agents in the making.

During the Enlightenment, this idea was taken as a basis for redefining adult-child relations. 'Education for freedom' was raised from an oxymoron to a radical policy proposal with far reaching consequences, from Rousseau's *Emile* to Humboldt's *Bildung*. We are now undergoing the next stage in this development, which involves intervening more directly than education normally allows to enhance not only humans but also machines and animals to a level of empowerment that qualifies them for 'human rights'. Call it 'Agape 2.0', if you will. It is an agenda of 'uplift', a term coined by the science fiction writer David Brin in the 1980s for a policy of 'affirmative action' to enable humans and some animal species to function as equals in a common social order, perhaps by upgrading the animals' cognitive powers or improving our own capacities for cross-species communication. For 'uplifters' this policy takes the idea of 'animal rights' more seriously than its proponents would normally dare. But would the animals be in a position to refuse this 'unconditional love'?

# WHY SOCIETIES CAN'T SURVIVE WITHOUT LOVE

MARIANNA FOTAKI

From St Paul's proclamation of love exceeding everything ('if I have all faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing') to the Beatles' famous song 'love is all you need' hummed by HRM the Queen during her **Diamond Jubilee** celebrations – love is universally praised and desired in popular culture and literature, yet it has different meanings for philosophers, ethicists or psychologists. But why is it all we need is love and is there a specific kind of love we all need?

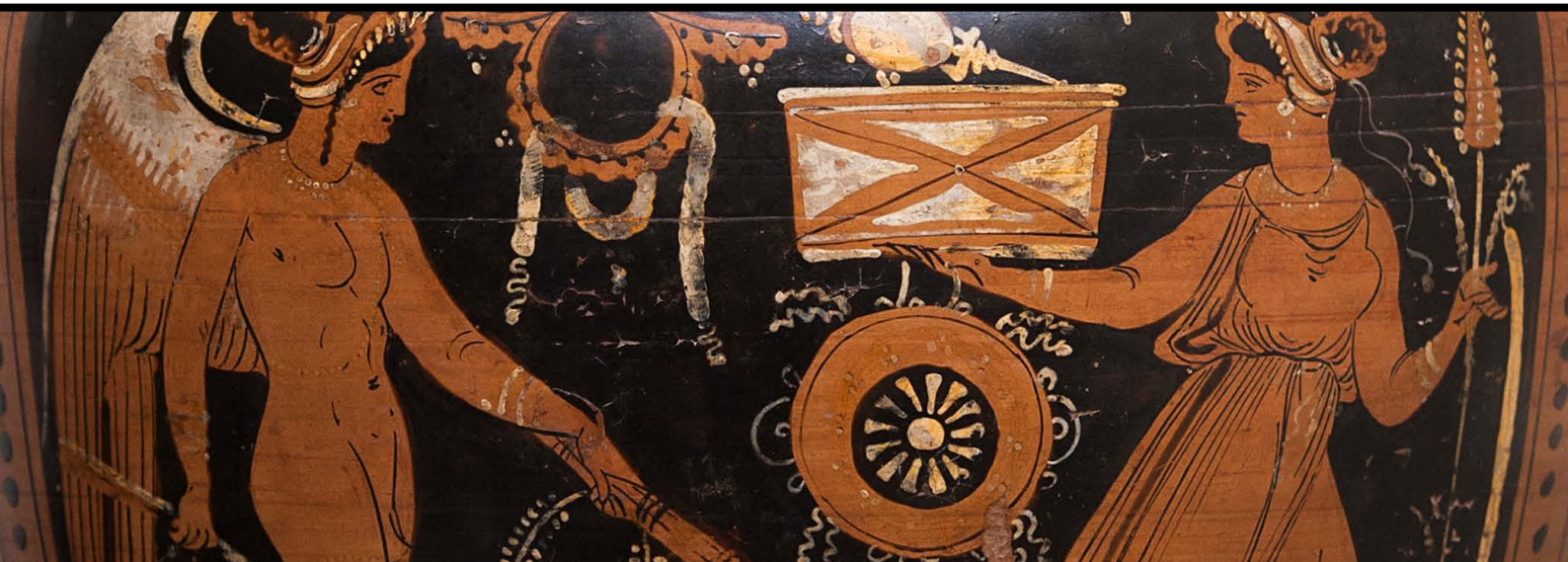
The psychosocial conception of human development can help answer these questions. In order to do so I propose to interpret Freud's core ideas of libidinal energy and Eros as life drive, through the work of the late Judith Butler (*The Frames of War; Precarious Life; Gender Trouble*). My focus is on the reproduction of the socially assigned injurious terms and identities suggested by Butler in her highly influential early writings on gender, which is closely linked to the absolute erasure of lives, in the case of the war on terror she later develops.

As a means of counteracting these, I offer an ethics of relationality, that acknowledges and brings love back to our thinking about social practices and public policies.

## THE NATURE AND MEANINGS OF LOVE

Since the time of the Ancient Greeks, various philosophical ideas sought to explain the nature of love. These ranged from the materialistic conception of love as purely a physical phenomenon to theories of love as an intensely spiritual affair that in its highest permits us to touch **divinity**.

The all-encompassing English term love for Ancient Greeks had three different meanings of Eros (denoting a desire for a physical object and/or the idea of an object itself for Plato), Filia





(referring to the bonds of friendly love and the appreciation of the other) and Agape extending to the love of God and/or brotherly love of all humanity.

This differentiation has influenced the dominant concepts of love in Western philosophy and religion and has had an impact on how love is theorized in psychoanalysis. For Freud love is synonymous with life drive: it is essential for humans to survive, grow and flourish, though he distinguishes between different kinds of love.

Freud thus conceptualizes love as both essential for individual's development: "Whoever loves becomes humble. Those who love have, so to speak, pawned a part of their narcissism" (Freud, *On Narcissism*) and as a *raison d'être* of creativity that makes society and culture possible. The latter is achieved when individuals sublime their sexual instincts and turn them into social ends and to bonding within successively larger communal groupings.

In order for individuals to be able to reach that stage they must experience a positive reinforcement of their behaviour by the important others with whom they form their first libidinal attachments. Moreover, Eros, the life drive sustaining individuals and societies, coexists with Thanatos, the death drive that threatens to annihilate both (Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*).

Jacques Lacan's re-reading of Freud through linguistics and poststructuralist theory offers a concept of human subjectivity that is discursively and relationally constituted. Becoming a subject as such is only made possible through its entry into the language/the symbolic order defined by a set of social norms, prohibitions, and rules of law (Lacan, *Ecrits*). The Lacanian subject therefore does not only exist in relation to an important other with whom it forms libidinal ties but also in relation to the big Other (standing in for a given symbolic order) whose recognition it seeks in order to become a social being. Both relational processes are deeply suffused with affect originating in libidinal love and its sublimation.

#### RELATIONAL TIES OF LOVE

To elaborate further on why relationality is the foundation of human subjectivity in both the social world and in individual exchanges, I now turn to Judith Butler, a feminist poststructuralist philosopher whose work is influenced by psychoanalysis. She draws on the idea of longing for recognition in the social, which constitute us as subjects according to Lacan, to theorize individuals' toxic attachments to injurious identities (e.g. related to gender or sexual orientation) causing them to detach themselves from their own embodied feelings, so they can exist socially.

Her theory of subjectivity in relation to excluded gender is then extended to describe those labelled as enemy combatants in the context of 'the war on terror' as having non-'grievable' lives that were not worth living in the first place. She uses this idea to argue that since our lives are inevitably precarious, we are all inextricably linked to others and to all lives. This, according to Butler, is a pre-condition of our own literal and symbolic survivability. Or, as she evocatively puts it: "If I seek to preserve your life, it is not only because I seek to

preserve my own, but because who 'I' am is nothing without your life, and life itself has to be rethought as this complex, passionate, antagonistic, and necessary set of relations to others" (*The Frames of War*).

In other words, without Eros (binding us to life) and Thanatos (providing us with the forcefulness that is necessary for action) we would not be able to survive. Butler's primary concern is what makes us social beings and how love and death drive can be put to use to ensure our symbolic and physical survival.

The absence of love towards the self and the other in organized forms of life and societies in general is at the root of many political and social problems. Examples of such is the logic of profit maximization in the finance industry and dominant business models, which by disregarding the lives of others and turning them into saleable commodities, rejects the life-affirming Eros. Fending-off death drive without love leads to conspicuous and compulsive consumerism that coexists with abject poverty.

The desire for recognition in the symbolic order that is driven by the same logic (of counteracting the fear of death) leads young women and men to feel totally insecure and to interfere with their bodies to reach the unattainable ideal as they strive for recognition (and love). By elucidating how all our lives are precarious and how we all depend on society for survival, Butler urges us to make explicit the role that governments and public policies play in how people understand, treat, and relate to one another.

Such realization of shared vulnerability which involves affective identification with the other through Eros is also indispensable for acts of care and for making ethical relations possible.



# MIASMA: A WORLD WITHOUT LOVE AND THE RISKS FOR THE NEW EUROPE

YIANNIS GABRIEL

Psychoanalysis holds no sentimental illusions about love. Love can be blind, selfish and cruel. But what would the world be without love?

Necessity alone, Freud reminds us, is not enough to hold groups and communities together. It is Eros, the power of love, that binds us together and neutralizes the many forces that threaten us with disintegration and destruction.

The poet says:

Love, invincible in battle,  
Love, who squanders the riches of the wealthy!  
Love, who keeps vigil on the maiden's soft cheek,  
Love, who roams the seas and pastures wild,  
Love, who casts your magic on all you touch.  
No god can escape you;  
Nor any human whose life lasts but a day.  
(Sophocles *Antigone* 781 – translation YG)

Yet, love hardly roams the fields of social sciences. We do encounter it sometimes under various strange, scientific-sounding guises, such as solidarity, affiliation or attachment but it scarcely enters mainstream discourses.

A prolonged exposure to an organization in which love was conspicuously absent drove home to me the power and necessity of love. This was not a machine-like bureaucracy in which each individual performed his or her duties efficiently, *sine ira et studio*, without passion or emotion. There was plenty of emotion in this organization, though very little love. There were generalized feelings of worthlessness and depression, an absence of any will to resist, an abject expectation of disaster and punishment and, maybe above all, a sense of uncleanness



and pollution. This was an organization in a profound trauma, a state I sought to explain by describing it as miasma.

Miasma is a word whose roots lie in Greek tragedy. It represents a contagious state of material, psychological and spiritual pollution that descends plague-like, and afflicts members of a family, a community or a city as a result of atrocious deeds perpetrated, knowingly or unknowingly, by someone. It is a highly toxic state that corrupts the institutional and moral fabric of a social unit. Above all, it dissolves love bonds and leaves a community dominated by fear, guilt, hate, despair and lies, individuals sinking into deep solitude and isolation. Attempts to offset miasma through various cleansing and purification rituals usually end up reinforcing it.

In organizations, miasma is liable to occur in periods of retrenchment and downsizing when employees are fired or ‘disappear’ without separation rituals or psychological mourning. The ‘old’ organization is frequently presented as corrupt, indulgent and inefficient, contrasted to the ‘new’ organization that is meant to be entrepreneurial, dynamic and flexible. Yet, for the surviving members, the new organization is tainted by the presence of ‘murderers’, leaders who have initiated a series of dismissals, and ‘corpses’, employees who have been dismissed or are about to be dismissed and disappear; once living and valued members of an organization, they are now discarded as dead wood.

The search for scapegoats offers strong evidence for the existence of miasma – it is an attempt to lift it which merely reinforces it. Thus, Oedipus is expelled from the city of Thebes to rid her of the pollution he had brought. Yet, his exile leads to further atrocities as his sons kill each other in battle, Antigone gets buried alive and so forth.

The Greek primitive ritual of ‘pharmakos’ was a close parallel to Hebrew scapegoating, only it involved the banishment or sacrifice of one of a community’s marginalized members as the price of purification for the rest. In organizations gripped by miasma, there is a double scapegoating. The (new) leader scapegoats the old leadership along with the dead wood or the dirt that it has bequeathed them, viewing downsizing as the necessary purification ritual which will augur a new beginning. However, the downsizing, the bleeding of an organization by its ruthless leader, is experienced by many organizational members as the true bringer of the miasma.

The link between miasma and the dissolution of love bonds is made very clear in Freud’s pioneering work on melancholia,

“The distinguishing features of melancholia are a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment.” (Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia* p252)

Freud observed many similarities in melancholia and mourning, but noted a key difference. Melancholia, like mourning, is a response to loss or separation, but one where the subject does not know what it is that has been lost.

Scapegoating is an effort to create such an agent and hold him or her responsible for the loss. As a social condition, melancholia is often linked to various witch-hunts, pogroms and persecutions whose brutality is only matched by their irrationality.

What is true of organizations is true of societies at large. One type of scapegoat that has assumed great significance in recent times is the parasite, the person or group who takes and does not give back, who sucks the blood out of the body of an organization or a community. In addition to different scroungers and loafers, refugees and immigrants are readily cast in this role and viewed as bringers of miasma to an otherwise healthy and prospering community.

As a Greek, I am all too aware of how readily my country been assigned the role of Europe's parasite in various narratives, notably those from the populist German press. The Greeks, and to a lesser extent other Mediterraneans, have been happy to live beyond their means, sucking resources from the ever-benevolent European family and giving nothing back. Instead of solidarity, Greece's economic and social plight has met with hostility and occasionally venom. If Greece has been cast in the role of Europe's miasma, various groups of immigrants and displaced persons (but also some politicians) have been cast in exactly the same role in Greece itself – they are the parasites who, alone, have brought devastation and ruin to the country.

It is ironic that the European 'project' that sought to put an end to centuries of hate and rancor is currently discovering new ways of targeting groups and populations as the bringers of miasma.

For political, organizational and other leaders to preach love can easily lead to ridicule and cynicism, themselves phenomena denoting a palpable absence of love. Yet, it seems to me that organizations, communities and even societies that exile love are ones that draw themselves close to the edge of darkness.



# NEW INTIMACIES: LOVE, JEALOUSY AND FLIRTATION IN POPULAR CULTURE

CANDIDA YATES

It is often said that without jealousy there is no love, and the dilemmas of jealous triangles have been a constant theme of plays, novels and cinema. We experience sexual jealousy when rightly or wrongly, we fear that a third person is going to take away someone we love and desire, and it becomes linked to the fear of rejection and even public humiliation.

From a Freudian perspective, jealousy is about the search for love and the loss of love and it tests our ability to cope with feelings of wounded narcissism, difference and the uncertainties of attachment ('Some neurotic mechanisms in jealousy, paranoia and homosexuality' in *On Psychopathology*). And yet, living with such uncertainty is easier said than done.

Today, it is often said that we live in a narcissistic culture where the risks of love and attachment are warded off by avoiding emotional commitment altogether. Against a wider social backdrop of late modernity, where the values and desires of consumption and promotional culture hold sway, it is interesting to reflect upon changing cultural representations of what flirtatious love, attachment and jealousy might mean for new intimacies today. At a time when an ethos of self-promotion is encouraged as a way of life, the losses of jealousy with its connotations of vulnerability and need are often equated with being a loser. Even what Freud called 'normal' everyday feelings of jealousy have fallen out of fashion and have become a source of embarrassment for those unlucky enough to experience it.

Focusing on images of male jealousy in mainstream cinema, we can explore the ways in



which the meanings of male jealousy and the codes and certainties of jealous possession have changed and shifted in Western popular culture. In cinema, the very conditions of the darkened auditorium may awaken in the spectator an eroticised, voyeuristic wish to watch and imaginatively re-live the rivalrous scenes of oedipal love, when the wounds of jealousy, loss and forbidden desire were first encountered.

Jealous triangles lie at the heart of film melodrama – from films such as *Rebecca* (1940) to *The Talented Mr Ripley* (1999), *Closer* (2004) or more recently, *Her* (2013). A key aspect of what I call reparative or ‘good-enough’ jealousy is the capacity to live with difference without resorting to destructive, rivalrous subject positions when faced with the complexity of the other. And yet, in the context of heterosexual male jealousy, the threat posed by fantasies of the castrating other and feminine engulfment, often loom large and are symbolised by images of the deadly femme fatale. Glen Close’s infamous portrayal of the jealous ‘bunny boiler’, in the 1987 film, *Fatal Attraction*, exemplifies such a trend, where a deadly woman carries the projections of the male gaze and become the fearful, green-eyed symbol of unacceptable desire.

Ernest Jones (*Balliere*) said that one way to avoid the narcissistic wounds of jealousy is to flirt and make one’s partner jealous instead. Today, feelings of jealousy and attachment may be defended against by avoiding commitment and by adopting the strategies of Don Juan, who deals with his potential jealousy by making others jealous instead. Flirtation is evocative in the contemporary mediatised, cultural context and the kinds of attachment, which emerge in that environment. Flirtation can be used as a metaphor to explore the sensibility of the lover in late modernity who uses social media like bee, and hovers briefly, searching for honey, before moving on.

Flirtation is not always linked to an impulse for mastery and sadism, as instead, it can in some contexts signal a certain playfulness and a desire to challenge the laws of the father and the symbolic structures of patriarchal authority. Adam Phillips (*On Flirtation*) argues that the playful quality of flirtation has its roots in early childhood where the imaginary possibilities for love are not yet closed down by the customs of monogamy. For Phillips, flirtation ‘is a way of cultivating wishes, of playing for time’.

The dilemmas of masculinity and flirtation either as a form of play or as mastery, can be found in contemporary films such as Steven Soderbergh’s (2013) *Behind the Candelabra*, where Liberace’s outrageous flirtations are explored – albeit affectionately. Steve McQueen’s film, *Shame* (2011) provides a more bleak view of a sex addict who takes flirtatious encounters to new levels in his obsession for anonymous sex - both in ‘the flesh’ so to speak, and on line, through pornography web sites. It may be that for some spectators, it is easier to watch the so-called subway sex-addiction of its handsome leading protagonist, than one who is governed by the vulnerabilities jealousy and the complexities of love. Yet, much of the film is bleak and is tinged with loss, and as the title suggests, it equates desire and looking with excess and shame. Such images have implications for the fantasies that take place in relation to film and popular culture, where new imaginative spaces emerge to cultivate wishes and work through the contemporary dilemmas of love and attachment.

# LOVING HEROES

BY ELIZABETH COTTON

This weekend I was waiting by the phone for 6 hours like a love struck puppy. I had tracked down the key activist in Hong Kong who is organising democratic trade unions in China. A fierce radical woman, what's not to love?

Hour 5 of missed calls and sharp email exchanges about my flabby-lactose-oozing Western perspective on the revolution and I'm getting the feeling she's-just-not-that-into-me. She calls me from a lift at 11pm and it starts badly. She's refusing to talk about the topic of the interview, and wants to know my left-wing credentials. In this type of situation I pull out the big guns, the things that normally send HRM and single men running for the hills. Organizing in the diamond mines of the Democratic Republic of Congo and negotiating human rights in the Transcaucasus usually do the trick. An NVQ in trade union radicalism.

There then proceeds to be 20 minutes of inspired and wise stuff on what it takes to build democracy in Hong Kong and China. I fall for this woman, her sharp analysis of the human condition and her decision to do something about it despite the large personal sacrifices that it entails.

There's a kind of begrudging love between activists, a shared idea of solidarity or the agape of 'brotherly love'. This love is close to the Greek word *philia*, a friendly love but with a generous pinch of the caring familial love of *storge* and passionate *Eros*.

Solidarity is a central organizing principle for activism, involving both the principle of common action with others and the identification of one's own interests with theirs. This model of cooperation can be deepened using psychoanalytic formulations of cohesion in groups, established





through identification and a focus on group tasks. For members of trade unions, this involves the commitment to support other members in response to conflicts with employers, a concrete task as well as a political one.

Solidarity can be conceived in two contrasting senses: first, as a normative or moral principle which creates an obligation to support other people in case of need; second, as a form of 'enlightened self-interest' with only weak ethical underpinning, motivated by the belief that an injury to one is an injury to all.

We often move between these two different modalities, but as the economic and political crisis deepens there is often a pressure to deliver mutual and concrete outputs. From climate change to the living wage, we want to see solidarity in action.

This is often a source of enormous frustration for activists involved in clinical or therapeutic work, finding psychoanalysis a bit slippery on the subject of change. Although many activists make powerful parallels between the emancipatory projects of Marx and Freud, the workings of psychoanalysis are often frustratingly slow and small, a long way from the grandiose ambitions of social justice and cyber campaigning .

The way that organising is done is also the source of loving bonds between activists. Late night chats and small group discussions where people ask each other what they think and actually listen to the answers. Good organisers seduce people into a powerful sense of belonging, where we can generalize about our connectedness and be part of the bigger picture. For many people joining a trade union offers this sense of belonging, a workplace equivalent of secure attachment and the primary basis for surviving work.

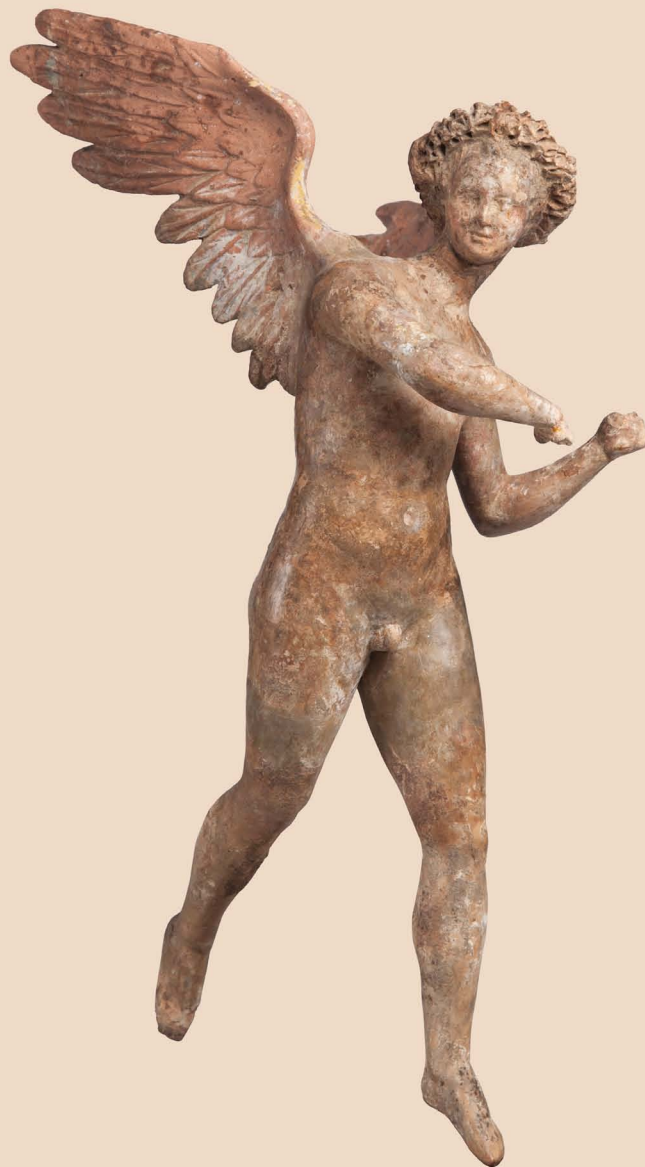
Getting to know people intimately is exciting stuff - the people we meet can be beautiful and delusional, a good look for some. Although left wing circles can bring out our internal Mother Teresa, there's a lot of sex happening at rallies and Living Marxism conferences. Eros enlists deep commitment.

Acts of solidarity can also build what Turquet calls 'oneness' - a strange almost cellular connection between people. Something like the Greek idea of *storge*, the begrudging love you have for a younger sibling who irritates and inspires at exactly the same time. Locked together in a 'union' against a common enemy, whether its parents, austerity or multinational corporations. In this sense activism is prone to paranoia, where "fear simplifies the emotional situation" (Winnicott, *Thoughts on the Meaning of the Word Democracy*, 1950). A gang like state against the capitalist class.

This familial love is essential for understanding the pressures activists put each other under, which from the outside look like the stuff of abusive relationships. Late night demands for a sacrificial offer and relentless calls on free time and emotional energy for the greater good. On the surface ideologically compelled but also driven by a vicious internal voice that demands we sacrifice everything to save the world. Activists often have superegos like tanks making us vulnerable to overwork, building crescendos of resentment and burnout. That internal bully that propels us towards yet another categorical imperative when our precious

hearts are screaming out “mate, it is your spiritual duty to stay on the sofa eating crisps”. And so it was with no surprise whatsoever that 10 minutes before the end of the interview this heroic creature becomes a total nightmare and demands that I drop my complicity with the neo-liberal system and immediately go to China to research the organising methods of autonomous Chinese activists. A blatant attempt to squirrel up all the energy and love in our exchange for the cause. Ten minutes of how the entire world’s precious experience leads us to one, and only one conclusion about how the world should be organized. A sudden shift away from love between equals, philia, to the bossy older sister love of storge.

Whatever our politics, love and its absence is always involved. Despite the frustrations, a politics of love is worth it because it’s in the mix between us that the revolution happens. The rest is just being able to live with yourself.



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*Remember that we sometimes demand definitions for the sake not of content, but of their form,*  
Rachel Kneebone, 2014

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Layout by Karolina Urbaniak