

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Statement and significance of the problem

There is love all over the world. Love is present in everything we say and do; even a person who is physically and mentally strong can be affected by love. Love can also demand a sacrifice of health, wealth, career and even happiness. Love is the driving force that influences every stage of a person's life. The ultimate aim of all love-affairs are actually more important than other pursuits in a person's life, love therefore is quite worthy of profound seriousness in regard to how we pursue it.

It is undeniable that love plays an enormous and unavoidable role in every aspect of our lives and our cultures, we find it discussed in song, film, and novels—entertainingly or seriously, love is a constant theme of maturing life and a vibrant theme of youth. In ancient Greece, *Plato* (427–347 B.C.E)¹ suggests that love is the desire to possess what is good and beautiful. This desire is caused because we are not perfect by our own nature and because we are mortal, as a result we seek immortality. The desire is expressed in different forms, sexual feelings, love and honor—in these two levels, we are immortal in that we are using others as a tool. The most advanced step is the love of knowledge and real beauty—in which we are immortal by combining them with something that is timeless, which may include our idea of “*real beauty*”.

¹ Plato (427 – 347 B.C.E) was a philosopher in Classical Greece and the founder of the Academy in Athens, the first institution of higher learning in the Western world. He is widely considered the most pivotal figure in the development of philosophy, especially the Western tradition.

If we consider the views of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951)², we will see that when we consider love—as in love to play computer games, love of freedom, loving your children, romantic love or love of God, we find that the word "love" is used differently and it provides different meanings as well. The love to play computer games absolutely does not look like a mother's love. Meanwhile, love to play computer games could mean "like", while patriotic or love the King might emphasize the feeling of "loyalty" rather than "like". (Armstrong, 2008)

The issue about love is taken to study seriously during the 20th century by Irving Singer (1925–2015)³, an American professor of philosophy who was on the faculty of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He was awarded a Fulbright research scholar grant, a Guggenheim fellowship and a Rockefeller Foundation grant. He was the author of 21 books in the field of humanistic philosophy, focusing on topics such as the philosophy of love, the nature of creativity, moral issues, aesthetics, and philosophy in literature, music, and film. (Roberts, 2015)

Irving Singer is a philosopher who has spent a long time reflecting on the concept of love which matters a great deal to most of us.

“Like the world itself, love is an emanation grounded in matter, and comparable to its parental origin. It is a dynamic and always changing process. At the same time, it can empower us to live our brief lives with significant fulfillment, sometimes with joy, and often with a sense of residual satisfaction.”

(Singer, *Philosophy of love : A partial summing-up*, 2009, p. 105)

Irving Singer can talk about the concept of love graciously and thoughtfully without dubious fantasizing beyond the limits of our knowledge. His philosophy of love is tangible

² Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889 – 1951), one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century, was an Austrian-British philosopher who worked primarily in logic, the philosophy of mathematics, the philosophy of mind, and the philosophy of language.

³ Irving Singer (1925 – 2015) was an American professor of philosophy who was on the faculty of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who focusing on topics such as the philosophy of love, the nature of creativity, moral issues, aesthetics, and philosophy in literature, music, and film.

based on verifiable assumptions which do not exceed the limits of natural events and ordinary experience.

Singer's many books are essential for the study of philosophy of love including "*The Nature of Love*" (1966–1987), a three-volume exploration of the idea of love in Western philosophy, as well as a second trilogy, "*Meaning in Life*" (1992–1996), which addresses the creation of value, the pursuit of love, and the harmony of nature and spirit. Other works focus on the nature of creativity, moral issues, and aesthetics. Singer has also explored philosophy in literature, music, and film. Moreover, there are still lingering problems about the relation between love and imagination, idealization, consummation, and aesthetics. He has grappled with them in the books, notably "*Feeling and Imagination: The Vibrant Flux of Our Existence*" (2001) and "*Explorations in Love and Sex*" (2001), which are organically derivative from the earlier studies on the nature of love. Last but not least, he made a brief of his philosophical thought about love in the "*Philosophy of Love: A Partial Summing-Up*" (2009).

The intention of this study is to find out what love is and how it relates to human beings from Irving Singer's perspective. It can be implied that love could be used to describe one's feelings in different ways. Dissimilarity, defining love can lead to misunderstandings and numerous problems. Love has a different meaning for each individual and culture. Hence, we cannot particularly determine the definition of love universally. This research has questioned if we cannot particularly determine the definition of love, how we can understand love.

Moreover, the issue of love is not just a problem in regard to the definition of language and meaning. Rather than trying to answer what love is, humanity still faces the problems of the decision that relates to love in all instances. The problem is ambiguous because it can be linked to the root question which is "*what is love*". All of these problems are significant philosophical questions for which the answer to these questions is often taken as the basis for defining the rules influencing the daily life of people. We do need to concern ourselves with how love is meant or intended in our life. As love is the engine for human beings, to know what love is all about can be fruitful for humanity and society.

The purpose of this study is an attempt to analyze the concept of love from Irving Singer's perspective through his writings in order to give them an understanding in regard to what it is when we are in love. It is hoped that this study will reflect how we love and how to be loved in a more comprehensible way; which will be a guideline for people who are interested in studying or trying to understand the issues about love and other related social issues. This will lead to the creation of knowledge to strengthen people for living lives in a more creative and meaningful way. By starting from the concept of love from the perspective of Irving Singer which is the key of this study.

1.2 Literature review

1.2.1 Related documents about "Love"

Love is an issue that has been studied extensively; love is also the analyzing study as the meaning in language and the comparing study with other issues, such as love and religion, love of science, etc.

For love that has been studied by the scientific method, scientists have progressed to a study conducted by the love through the work of the human brain that is trying to explain human behavior when they are in love.

Helen E. Fisher (1945—)⁴, an American anthropologist and human behavior researcher, has spent her academic life trying to figure out what is going on in the brains of those who are in the 'butterflies-in-the-stomach' throes of passionate romantic love. She has scanned the brains of young lovers and found that when they are focusing on the object of their affection, a whole host of brain parts start lighting up. One of the two most important regions was initially a little surprising. First, she found that the caudate nucleus – part of the primitive reptilian brain – is highly active in these amorous individuals. She also saw the brain areas associated with dopamine and norepinephrine production light up. Both are brain chemicals are associated with pleasurable activities and excitement. She notes that other parts of the reward system areas, like the one that activates when you're eating chocolate,

⁴ Helen E. Fisher (1945 -) is an American anthropologist, human behavior researcher, and self-help author who leading expert on the biology of love and attraction.

plays a role during this phase of love. She supports the hypothesis that like chocolate, being head over heels in love is addictive. (Slater, 2006)

While scientists are trying to answer questions about love, the Evolutionary Psychology⁵ has assumed that the trend and the ability to love is what we have inherited genetically. Our thoughts and mind are already prepared for love and it could well mean that love is part of human nature.

Human beings have increasingly developed special kinds of beliefs and desires which focus not upon the world but mental items. We have attitudes toward our belief and desire. The point is desires do not automatically guide actions; they only guide actions in connection with a surrounding set of beliefs and in concert with or opposite of other desires. The experience of love will depend upon features of the culture and the individual.

In terms of religion, there are extensively studied of love from the perspective of important thinkers as in *Sathya Sai Baba's concept of Love* (2013) studying concept of love described by Sathya Sai Baba⁶. The findings show that, according to Sathya Sai Baba, love is pure and exists in every one's heart; is loving-kindness (metta) without selfishness and stability all extended to others without limitation or boundaries. Love has two characteristics, first, love as god was regarded as the goal of spiritual practice. Second, love as devotion was regarded as an important qualification for the devotee. In order to realize their inner self, Atman, firm love is a necessary condition. (Chuenchom, 2013)

The philosophical discussion regarding love logically begins with questions concerning its nature. This implies that love has a "nature," a proposition that some may oppose arguing that love is conceptually irrational, in the sense that it cannot be described in rational or meaningful propositions. For such critics, who are presenting a metaphysical and epistemological argument, love may be an ejection of emotions that defy rational examination; on the other hand, some languages, such

⁵ Evolutionary Psychology (EP) is a theoretical approach in the social and natural sciences that examines psychological structure from a modern evolutionary perspective. It seeks to identify which human psychological traits are evolved adaptations – that is, the functional products of natural selection or sexual selection in human evolution.

⁶ Sathya Sai Baba (1926–2011) is one of the most revered spiritual Indian teacher whose life and message are inspiring people to turn God-ward and to lead more purposeful and moral lives.

as Papuan⁷, do not even admit the concept, which negates the possibility of a philosophical examination. In English, the word "love," which is derived from Germanic forms of the Sanskrit "*lubh*" (desire), is broadly defined and hence imprecise, creating problems of definition and meaning, which are being resolved by means of extending the scope as reference to the Greek terms—eros, philia, and agape.

The philosophical treatment of love transcends a variety of sub-disciplines including epistemology, metaphysics, religion, human nature, politics and ethics. Often statements or arguments concerning love, its nature and its role in human life for example the connection to one or all the central theories of philosophy and it is often compared with, or examined in the context of the philosophy of sex and gender as well as body and intention. The task of a philosophy of love is to present the appropriate issues in a cogent manner drawing on relevant theories of human nature, desire, ethics, and so on.

According to the documents aforementioned, it has been found that love is a wide concept and has a lot of aspects. The previous studies are in depth and done point by point, or by comparative study without a clearly seen and easily understood connection. It mainly focuses on the question what is love and its nature, in order to define love or focus on the study of behavior and brain system.

Additionally, apart from Evolutionary psychology and Neuroscience⁸, we have to recognize that the experience of love changes as the surrounding culture of beliefs changes, particularly the beliefs which articulate what we think another person is, what we think is good or right, what we think are our duties to ourselves. Love is a cultural construct which depends on various features of a society.

1.2.2 Related documents about Irving Singer

Irving Singer was born in Brooklyn on December 24, 1925. He graduated from Townsend Harris High School at age 15, having skipped three grades. He enrolled

⁷ The Papuan languages are a subset of Languages of Papua New Guinea of the western Pacific island of New Guinea, and neighboring islands.

⁸ Neuroscience is the scientific study of the nervous system which is currently an interdisciplinary science that collaborates with other fields such as chemistry, cognitive science, linguistics, mathematics, medicine, genetics, and allied disciplines including philosophy, physics, and psychology.

in Brooklyn College, then served in World War II, at that time he wrote a book, *"History of the 210th Field Artillery Group"*. He later collected his letters home to his brother in an unpublished anthology, which he called *"Memories of World War II"*. Irving Singer earned a doctorate at Harvard and joined the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1959 after teaching at Harvard, Cornell, the University of Michigan and Johns Hopkins. He was awarded a Fulbright research scholar grant, a Guggenheim fellowship and a Rockefeller Foundation grant. He was the author of 21 books in the field of humanistic philosophy, focusing on topics such as the philosophy of love, the nature of creativity, moral issues, aesthetics, and philosophy in literature, music, and film. The beginning of focusing on philosophy of love started from his family members who urged him to be more affectionate. He spent years on researching and writing three-volume examination of the subject titled *"The Nature of Love"* (1966–1987), a three-volume exploration of the idea of love in Western philosophy. Constructing intellectual histories rather than highbrow versions of the *Kama Sutra*, he attempted to explore whether romantic love was a recent invention and placed it in his another three-volume philosophical context of the subject titled *"Meaning in Life"* (1992–1996), which addresses the creation of value, the pursuit of love, and the harmony of nature and spirit. Additionally, there still lingering problems about the relation between love and imagination, idealization, consummation, and the aesthetics. He has wrestled them in the books, notably *"Feeling and Imagination: The Vibrant Flux of Our Existence"* (2001) and *"Explorations in Love and Sex"* (2001), that are organically derivative from the earlier studies on the nature of love. To finish, he made a brief of his philosophical thought about love in the *"Philosophy of Love: A Partial Summing-Up"* (2009).

Irving Singer is a philosopher who has spent a long time ruminating on themes that matter a great deal to people. He can talk precisely and insightful about the concept of love which most people experience and would like to understand better. His philosophy of love is tangible based on verifiable assumptions which do not exceed the limits of our knowledge. He regards love as an imaginative act, an almost natural bestowing of value on another, but he wants to root it in the sexiness of biology. Neither idealist nor materialist, he puts himself forward as a pluralist of love.

1.3 Purposes of the study

1.3.1 To study the types of love from several perspectives

1.3.2 To study the concept of love from Irving Singer's perspective

1.3.3 To analyze the concept of love from the perspective of multiple researchers and philosophers

1.4 Education and application advantages

1.4.1 To understand the concept of love from Irving Singer's perspective

1.4.2 To create an approach for understanding and analyzing the phenomena which is associated with love in contemporary society

1.4.3 To create a guideline for people who are interested in studying or trying to understand love issues and other related social issues

1.4.4 To strengthen people's knowledge of living creative and meaningful lives

1.5 Research designs, scope and methods

1.5.1 Scope of study

1. Scope of contents

This study mainly focuses on the analysis of nature, meaning, characteristics and purpose of love from Irving Singer's perspective to find out how love works on the human mind, to analyze the relevant internal and external conditions and to observe which enables love to occur as it does and to see how it manifests.

2. Scope of materials

The materials for the analysis are Irving Singer's books which are;

- 1) The Nature of Love Volume 1: Plato to Luther (1984)
- 2) The Nature of Love Volume 2: Courtly and Romantic (1984)
- 3) The Nature of Love Volume 3: The Modern World (1987)
- 4) Meaning in Life Volume 1: The Creation of Value (1992)
- 5) Meaning in Life Volume 2: The Pursuit of Love (1994)

- 6) Meaning in Life Volume 3: The Harmony of Nature and Spirit (1996)
- 7) Feeling and Imagination: The Vibrant Flux of Our Existence (2001)
- 8) Explorations in Love and Sex (2001)
- 9) Philosophy of Love: A Partial Summing-Up (2009)

1.5.2 Research methodology

The methodology of the research is Documentary Research. It would be done by collecting data from various sources, putting them in order and analyzing them in order to draw an educated conclusion from the defined topics presented in an analytical and descriptive way with the analytical study as the sequence below;

1. Study the history of the concept of love in order to understand the development of the concept including contextual factors that are involved in bringing the concept to use
2. Study the biography of Irving Singer in order to understand the background of his life, daily life, education and work for understanding the origin of the idea in a deeper way
3. Study the details in the books of Irving Singer in order to understand the concept of love and other related concepts
4. Study the video lectures of Irving Singer on the philosophy of love in the western world to implement them for analyzing and summarizing the meaning of love
5. Study additional documents from both Thai and English authors in order to analyze and summarize the results