

CHAPTER 4

The Analysis of Irving Singer's Perspective of Love

Singer's approach to love in philosophy, literature, music, and psychology is classical throughout, as it arises out of the distinction between eros and agape as a conceptual force that underlies much of the Western tradition. Both his historical analyses and his own philosophizing express a respect for the play of imagination in science, literature, and art. He approaches things from an empirical point of view. He prefers horizontal perspectives in the case that they enable us to understand love in terms of diversities within nature itself. He said that human and their fundamental types of relations are ineluctably plural.

“I have constantly refused to rank the types of love by means of any a priori hierarchy, or to diminish the value of one or another. I want to fashion pluralistic ideas of what operates in our nature through them all separately and with regard to their feasible coordination. A good life requires an awareness, and acceptance, of that diversified prospect.”

(Singer, *Philosophy of love : A partial summing-up*, 2009, p. 111)

Singer criticized the tradition of transcendental love. He recognized the importance of the transcendental love as it falsifies the way in which love is related to normal responses that belong to human as part of nature rather than reach beyond nature. He rejected the idea that we transcend ourselves when we are in love and bought down a worldly concern about love. For Singer, love has to be understood in terms of what happens to ordinary relationship which matters in the world we live in.

“When love succeeds, it is a transcendent good but there is no transcendental object that necessarily defines its being. The relationship of love is something that people, men and women, establish in their day-by-day experience with each other—assuming they have learned how to do so.”

(Singer, *Explorations in Love and Sex*, 2001, p. 78)

Singer began his understanding of love with the doubt that the notion of romantic love as a recent creation was incomplete at best. Most of his discussions about love center on romantic love which is between people and Singer's discussion spends proportionate time on romantic love. He suggests that to study the philosophy of love completely we would have to investigate the ways in which developments of mind are capable of altering behavior while also following a course of evolution within their own domain.

The ideology of love was mainly a historical and critical investigation. People have felt its influence. It is not surprising that the word is used so loosely in everyday language. Sometimes it refers to sexual desire, sometimes to religions, sometimes to human relations.

Human being is characterized by the creation of meaning. Meaning is therefore linked with a need to love and to be loved. In the need to love and to be loved is the need to have a meaningful relationship with people that matter to us. Love is a principal form of life by which we seek meaningful relationships to persons, things, or ideals that matter to us. In itself, love is widely bound up with the relationship between the abstract and the concrete which establishes an extensive portion of what it is to be a human being.

In the *Meaning in life*, Singer said that love is a prime contributor to meaning in life. For a person in love, life is full of meaning. The beloved matters the most to him or her, even if nothing else does. Love is not only a contributor to meaningful life but also may underlie all other forms of meaning. He explores that by very nature love is the principal means by which people seek affective relations to persons, things, or ideals that have value and importance for us. Therefore, meaning in life is equally the pursuit of love.

Our world is moving into a way that will create new values different from the old period. We live in accordance with multiple idealizations and whatever values that matter to us. So, love which is an enormous category of thought should not be tied with absolute

definition or comprehensive solution. Love is a universal feeling, but there is not a "universal" definition of love because everyone has a different nature and we express this feeling in a different way. Since there is much information about love, friendship, sex and all the other relations. We can only make a personal portrait that may be true to ourselves, to our times and to our style of thought. Moreover, we can offer an imaginative which plays an important role in all our experience especially the thinking about love, whether it is the love of God or any form of love among human being. The idea of it is difficult to work with. It is the topic that needs to be studied along with other disciplines. This is the way of pluralistic study which Singer suggest to be the way of study in this contemporary world because a good life requires an awareness and acceptance of diversified prospect.

4.1 Romantic love

As Singer questions about romantic love as a recent idea, I also focus on the analysis of romantic love that relates to the current situation as well because people nowadays treat romantic love as if it is the only kind of love. They tend to assume that passionate attachment alone makes life worth living. People today tend to pay more attention to romantic love. Love is the primary factor in the decision to marry. Many discourses about love are influenced by the romantic idea in terms of the result of ideal romantic love in the *Symposium*—from Aristophanes' speech about Soulmate—it affects to people today. We embrace the belief that we have to marry the half of us which in reality we cannot know exactly who he or she is.

Since romantic love is the product of Western culture, there has been a belief that romantic love is specific only in Western society or in a society of middle to upper classes. The fact is romantic love can be found in various societies and cultures. Love is regarded as a universal phenomenon of emotion that can provide many different meanings. But it is still necessary to distinguish between love as an emotion which is the part of human nature and love which is the product of a social process. Romantic love is the fruit of a social transformation which binds the individuality and identity of the person with the bond between the couple. This kind of love is a major factor that leads to the decision of marriage.

Under the influence of the French revolution (1789-1799), which was a major turning point in many respects, the ideas of liberty, equality, and fraternity encouraged people to love whomever they want to love without any external interference, romanticism appeared more obviously. There has been a great deal of sexual behavior than when the church was powerful. Additionally, the role of the woman was changed. The woman also could decide who they wanted. They can freely express their needs, emotions, and feelings.

For many people, the romantic bond does not last for more than two or three months. Those who have this kind of attachment may be captivated by the unrealistic hope that it will never end. This belief can lead to serious disappointment for an individual. Having unrealistic hope directly affects people's actions and state of mind. We can see an obvious example of hate speeches by people who do not succeed in love. They use hate speech to attack the person whom they love or once loved which is a kind of dehumanization and sometimes leads to the loss of lives and properties. These things will not happen or happen less if we can accept the fact that love, whether caused by nature or by nurture, is something that can be changed, as well as other things in our life. It can change to another form. As time goes on romantic love that we have for our beloved when we first meet may be lost or transformed into another form of love. Starting a long-term relationship or a marriage and wanting to make it successful calls for the consideration of many factors more than romantic love alone.

There is an interesting study. From the study of Helen Fisher and her team about the brain when you are in love, first they study people who were happily in love. They found an activity area near the base of the brain called the Ventral Tegmental Area (VTA) and in some cells called the A10 cells, cells that actually make dopamine, a natural stimulant, spray it to many brain regions. The VTA is part of the brain's reward system. It is way below the cognitive thinking process and emotions which are associated with wanting, motivation, focus, and craving—which is the same brain region that receives the reward signal from using drugs like cocaine. They are also looking at the data of the people who had just been rejected. They found activity in exactly the same brain region associated with intense romantic love. That brain system—the reward system for wanting, for

motivation, for craving, for focus—becomes more active when you cannot get what you want.

They also found activity in a brain region associated with calculating gains and losses. This part of the brain is becoming active when you are measuring your gains and losses. It is also the brain region that becomes active when you are willing to take enormous risks for huge gains and huge losses.

Lastly, they found activity in a brain region associated with deep attachment to another individual. When you have been rejected in love, not only you are overwhelmed with feelings of romantic love, but you are feeling a deep attachment to this individual. Moreover, this brain circuit for reward is working, and you are feeling the intense energy, intense focus, intense motivation and the willingness to risk it all to win life's greatest prize – an appropriate mating partner.

From this experiment, there is a conclusion that romantic love is a drive, a basic mating drive not the sex drive. Romantic love enables you to focus your mating energy on just one at a time, conserve your mating energy, and start the mating process with this single individual. In other words, romantic love leads us to a monogamy. And indeed, it has all of the characteristics of addiction. You focus on the person, you obsessively think about them, you crave them, you distort reality, your willingness to take enormous risks to win this person.

The study of Helen Fisher is a good relating to the concept of love as the appraisal and bestowal from Singer. We can see the connection of Singer's concept of love as appraisal and bestowal and Helen Fisher's brain study. The study suggests that a brain region associated with calculating gains and losses are working at a time when people in love. This can support that the appraisal – the way of evaluating – and bestowal are collaboration. In the relationship, we have evaluated all the time. Human life is full of choices and decisions.

Love is a way of valuing something. Love affirms the goodness of the object of love. Many say that love searches for what is valuable, others say that love creates value that

makes the beloved valuable. Both assertions are often true, but sometimes false, and neither explains the type of valuing which is love.

4.2 Love as appraisal and bestowal

Some of the philosophers such as Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) have assumed that all love is a device for getting someone else to give us the love we desire. It would follow that love is just a search for goods one values because of their utility to oneself. Singer called it as an appraisive attitude. For appraisal, others matter to us and affect our emotions because of benefits we hope to derive from association with them. The appraisal seeks to find an objective value that things have in relation to one or another community of human interests. In other words, appraisal is a branch of empirical science, specifically directed toward the determining of value. It is more than estimate objective value. We decide what is worth to us—a subjective appraisal. It determines a purely individual value and it may opposed to any objective value. Subjective and objective value depend upon an object's ability to satisfy prior interests that motivates us toward one object.

Singer tried to go beyond love as the appraisal. He offered that love is the bestowal as well. Bestowal is created by the affirmative relationship itself, by the very act of responding favorably, giving an object emotional and importance regardless of its capacity to satisfy interests. Insofar as love is bestowed, it creates a kind of value in the beloved that goes beyond appraisal. In loving another, we make things or people we love valuable in a way that would not otherwise exist. Singer suggests that love creates a new value, one that is not reducible to the subjective or objective value. It is both of them. Love is related to both; they intertwine in it. Unless we appraised we could not bestow a value that goes beyond appraisal; and without bestowal there would be no love. For the effort to succeed, it must be accompanied by justifiable appraisals, objective as well as subjective. Love is more than just an appraisal or a desire to be loved. Therefore, human love is both appraisal and bestowal.

When appraisal occurs alone, our attitude develops in the direction of science, ambition or morality to do the right thing. We need not bestow value upon another person. All we need is just recognize the truth about his or her character and act appropriately. Love

would not be love unless appraising were accompanied by the bestowing of value. Every appraisal may lead on to a further bestowal. Once bestowal has occurred, you may hardly care that your beloved is not deemed desirable by other people. Love is a way of compensating for and even overcoming negative appraisals. Love as bestowing differs from related attitudes such as gratitude, generously or condescension. It bestows value without calculation. With love, we bestow not just because we received. It confers importance no matter what the object is worth.

In all communities people have individual value for one another. We are means to each other's satisfactions, and we constantly evaluate one another on the basis of our individual interests. We are always setting prices on other people and on ourselves. But we also bestow value in the manner of love. We respond to another as something that cannot be reduced to appraisal. The lover takes an interest in the beloved as a person, not as a properties. You bestow importance upon your beloved's need and desires, even when they do not your own satisfaction. Whatever their personality, you give a value it would not have apart from your loving attitude. In relation to the lover, the beloved has become valuable for her own sake.

In the love of persons, people bestow value upon one another over and above their subjective or objective value. The mutuality of love occurs when each participant receives bestowed value while also bestowing it upon the other. Mutuality has always been recognized as a desired outcome of love. The lover makes the beloved valuable only by attracting and committing themselves to the beloved. Though the beloved may satisfy their needs, they refuses to use their lover as just an instrument. To love someone as a person is to desire him or her for the sake of values that appraisal might discover, and yet to place one's desire within a context that affirms him or her importance regardless of these values.

The person we love is generally one who satisfies our needs and desires. They may do so without either of us realizing the full extent of these satisfaction; and possibly all individual value is somehow based upon unconscious effects. Our experience of another person includes a large network of individual evaluations continually in progress and available to consciousness. At each moment our interests are being gratified or frustrated, fulfilled or saddened, strengthened or weakened in relation to the other person. Individual

value is rarely stable. It changes in accordance with our success or failure in getting what we want. And as this happens, our perception of the beloved also changes. The attitude of love probably includes more individual appraisals than any other.

4.3 Love is an acceptance of another being, a sharing of self

Mapping the relationship between love and autonomy, caring may make us find new and more satisfying ways to sustain the relationship. At the same time, the object achieves a kind of autonomy. Singer expands his distinction between appraisal and bestowal by portraying love as an acceptance of the autonomy of some other person. He argues that love is a means by which one respects and sustains another's autonomy while also affirming one's autonomous relation to that person. This is an act of freedom regardless of the other kinds of freedom a lover may thereby renounce.

When we love no matter what is the object of love, it has special value to us, it is ours. Singer said that it is not merely as a possession but just something we care about, a part of the affective life. We also care about its utility. We need it for the benefits it provides. But in the process of loving, we establish another kind of relationship. It is important beyond its subjective or objective value. It becomes a focus of attention and possibly an object of personal commitment. We bestow a value it could not have had otherwise. We might say that it is valuable for its own sake. For the value that we bestow will not depend upon the capacity to satisfy.

4.4 Love in relation to social issues

Many social issues show that our erotic and passionate beliefs are not only ideational. They are also a function of social, economic and environmental circumstances. Love is not nonsense and can be used as a base for any study. It can also be used as an argument for different social issues.

The most interesting ideas about love from Greek period are homosexual which assume that love involves a kind of intellectual friendship only men can have with one another. Homosexual, same-sex marriage or LGBT (Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) is an issue still being challenged. Various views are held or have been expressed by religious organizations in relation to same-sex marriage. Arguments either in favor of or in

opposition to same-sex are often made on religious grounds or formulated in terms of religious doctrine. From a perspective of romantic love where passion matters most, people should derive liberation and acceptability, and if so why should we care about gender that much. We can see a contradiction between homosexual liberation and the growth of romanticism under the limitations related to differing social conditions.

In the history of ideas, courtly and Romantic concepts have been a kind of democratization of Greek and religious thinking about love. The process of democratizing love developed from courtly love which partly based on Christianity and partly based on the Greek—Neo-Platonism. It was the beginning of the process of extending the ideal of love to ordinary people. Courtly or Romantic love was generally very ethical, highly idealistic, concerned about great achievements of the spirit that men and women could experience in their relationship. They encouraged the belief that everybody can possibly attain a worthy love.

Currently, the love between people is sometimes treated as if it were religion love which is a disposition that the church always feared. You cannot love God with all your heart, your might, and all your soul if you are going to love your lover that way. The church failed to see that men and women can achieve a kind of natural and authentic love that may be equal to the love of God and even independent of it. The way you love another human being will be the same as the kind of religious love that only God merits. So, on the other hand, your lover is your God. The kind of religious love is not only ideational anymore, you can touch it by the way you love people or things that appear in real life.

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