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Love & Ecstasy: The Universal Will, the Individual Experience, and The Community Between.

Three of the most famous of the Greek words for love are Eros, sensual or passionate love, storge, familial or natural love, and philia, friendship or brotherly love. These all emanate from a connection between people. However “love,” especially in the monolithic English tetragram, transcends the particularities of any of those connections. For as long as poets, philosophers, and theologians, have waxed poetic about what capital L “Love” truly is, a total consensus is still yet to be reached. A relative new comer to this conversation is American positive psychologist Barbara Fredrickson, who writes about the biomechanics of love in *Love 2.0*. Another author, American philosopher and professor Alva Noë, writes about love from the perspective of pop music, in “Air Guitar Styles.” Both of these authors go in depth about the conditions and processes of their respective topic. These are complex phenomenon, similar to those described by American science author Steven Johnson in “Myth of the Ant Queen.” All three point, though through different means, and a broader idea of “love” than told in the common use of the word. The transcendent ideal “love” is a synchronization, or union, of individual, and is encouraged through patterns in biology. This reveals “love” as a universal will to unite in harmony, and tribes as a manifestation of that will.

A tribe is a a cohesive group of people. Often dismayed as brutish group-think, the natural law of “love” cultivates tribes, and affirms them as a force for mutual support and joy. Emotions that are commonly associated with love, such as joy, lust, or admiration, are

situational, individual, and not universal. “Love”’s nature is resonant. There are certain mechanics of human physiology that make some kinds of action self-perpetuating. Fredrickson writes that oxytocin “can jump the gap between people such that someone else’s oxytocin flow can trigger your own. A biochemical synchrony can then emerge that supports mutual engagement, care, and responsiveness” (Fredrickson 128). The hormone oxytocin is released when engaging in physical touch, eye contact, or even just when trusting another person. However, the release of oxytocin is also associated with triggering these behaviors. When one has oxytocin stimulating activities done to them, they are likely to preform similar actions in return. That is to say that human physiology naturally forms a positive feedback loop, which favors bringing people into a similar state of mind. This loop extends into all individuals involved. When engaged in the loop, the brains of individuals begin to have more similar chemical environments. There are many ways in which people are capable of forming this kind of harmony, however the human body has a naturally occurring “resonant frequency” for this kind of harmony. This harmony is “Love,” in the ideal sense. It resonate person to person, as seen with oxytocin studies, however it can also resonate through a larger whole. Noë describes the anecdotal, or point of view, experience of goers to such a concert, saying that they don’t talk about music, rather “They’ll tell about the excitement, the thrill, the person or people on the stage, his or her sex appeal, how it felt to be there, in the presence of greatness, part of a crowd, a sense of connection to the star or to the audience” (Noë 168). Concert goers aren’t gathered for a shared intellectual appreciation, rather concerts are a highly-sensory, ecstatic experience. Unrecognized by the most of these individuals, oxytocin likely plays a major role in cultivating these experiences. More broadly, fans are having synchronous experiences, to the extent that they conciously feel like part of a tribe. Fans share in their idolatry, often by mimicry of the idol:

dancing, playing air guitar, singing along. These actions resonate with the crowd, and between fans. It causes the fans' ecstatic experience of joy, belonging, mutual care and respect, oneness, and ultimately love. The word resonance comes from the Latin *resonare*: literally *re* (back or again) *sonare* (emit sound), meaning resound or echo. "Love" is the outcome of unity. When nature reproduces patterns, such as oxytocin inducing oxytocin stimulating behaviors, that is a tendency for nature to favor "love." In other words, the agenda of nature is often "love." This is the case with pop fans. It also is the mechanism for the similar qualities of pop fans, and thereby the mechanism through which unconnected fans can become a unified tribe.

A community that is tightly supported with "love" will be made stronger because of it. Identifying the strengths of communities, therefore, is one way to find "love." Infamous the U.K. has historically, and still presently though to the same extent, enforced an anti-LGBT social status. However, in Manchester, there is a place known as the Gay Village. Johnson states that "there are reports dating back to the mid-nineteenth century of men cruising other men on these blocks, looking for casual sex, more lasting relationships, or even just the camaraderie of shared identity at a time when that identity dared not speak its name" (Johnson 195). The Gay Village, before it was open about itself, was a covert community, where individuals had to depend on each other due to pervasive homophobia. It is easy to expect gay men to find each other, and experience eros, philia, and even storge with each other. Examining the individual anecdotal experience, there are pragmatic factors which lead them to choose this street, and biological factors which lead them to choose to go to any street. Their experiences are no doubt filled with nervousness, excitement, fear, and joy. However there is also a pattern that is larger than any individual, that of the community, or rather, that of the tribe. Gay Mancunians have gone to the same street corner for hundreds of years, that is, bringing themselves into a kind of union with

other Gay Mancunians. Being with other members of the same community, and engaging in the same activities is a kind of synchronization. This pattern is sustained for a long time, like the resonant frequency of a large echoing room. These Mancunians are agents of a “love” system, each individual sending out small sounds, which echo and join together, compounding on the “resonant frequency” of their environment. Fredrickson writes that “love” systems “shape your motives and behaviors in subtle ways, yet ultimately, their actions serve to strengthen your relationships and knit you in closer to the social fabric of life” (Fredrickson 122). The small phenomena of a “love” system’s components influence the actions of the whole and to so to favor strong relationships and a stable social reality. These are symptoms that can be considered the results of union, and shows that those particular “resonances” are indeed those of “love.” Therefore, if a system works to bring individuals into union, and the outcomes tend to be strong relationships and stable social fabric, its likely that “love” is found within the system, if it is not the principal nature of the system. Gay Mancunians ability to resist state violence acts as a testament to the strength of their community, and reveals the effectiveness and prevalence of love. Looking at the Gay Village and pop concerts side by side, both feature groups of individuals, who come together because of a common cause, and then become similar because of common action. Ultimately, they both form a resonance of “love,” and result in strong community bonds.

From a particular anecdotal perspective, love is experienced as ecstatic experiences: the rush of arousal, the thrill of a crowd, or the awe of true comradery. Truly, this kind of love does transcend the typical uses of the word, such as for affection, attraction, or ecstasy. “Love” begins as an inclination on one individual, spurring them to take action in the likeness of others. This union is “love,” and it causes both the anecdotal experience, and the subsistent resonance. In that

resonance, trust, care, and mutual support are the default methods of operation, which instigate
firth moments of “love.” This pattern is now being scientifically described, grounding and
elaborating upon the phenomena. It has been found that the universe has a tendency, or one could
say a soft spot, for “love.”

Works Cited

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