

On Love

“Love is that condition in which the happiness of another person is essential to your own.”

- Robert A. Heinlein *Stranger in a Strange Land*

I have trouble understanding love. Maybe it is simply this specific definition of love that I don't seem to comprehend, but I feel as though it is something personally unobtainable.

I suppose I could be described as a little headstrong. I'd like to believe that I am fairly assertive. I value independence, and I like paving my own way. I am content in my solitude, a trait which I believe many lack. To be clear, I am not a heartless cold-blooded isolate. I have a close network of friends who I enjoy spending time with. I feel compassion towards them. I want them to depend on me because I know I can depend on them. I will gladly make sacrifices for their betterment and I'd like to believe that my loyalty is unconditional. I care for them because I love them. Yet this love is different than the love that I feel, or maybe I am simply told, is "real love". This romantic love alludes me. I think the idea of ending out my days with a special someone seems unnecessary. I value time with myself, so much so that I can envision myself growing old alone. And I think that's perfectly fine.

But maybe it isn't.

Sometimes I question if I am self-sufficient to a fault. Right now in my life I can confidently say that I am happy with my existence as an individual. By Heinlein's definition, if love represents a connection between two people so strong that one's happiness is dependent on the other's, why should I love? I have trouble imagining a dependency on another being for something as fundamental as happiness being healthy. How can lovers preserve their self-identity within a relationship without impeding on their partner? Does a relationship which gives each partner room for their personal goals and perhaps even selfish ideals still love? Could it be classified as love's lesser and more impersonal cousin, coexistence?

Perhaps I feel this way because I am young and I have never experienced a connection with the one. Maybe I look upon the world with such disdain because I believe that the Hallmark image of romance is nothing but a cruel illusion devised to propagate economic behavior which is adorably defined as love. Maybe I am a cynic.

But I'd like to think that this is not the case. I think the modern idea of love is inherently tied to possession. Simply, I do not want to be confined. The promise of everlasting love by associating my own identity so much with another's so that if they were to leave I would experience a deep internal pain, as purely integral as maybe surgically removing my left tit, seems silly. In the song, "What is Love", this all encompassing act of growth and union merely represents the heads side of a coin, the tails side being a fear of loss so dreadfully consuming. To me, this rejection speaks to a shared need to avoid the fall out of love.

I believe that love is not what it is paraded around as in early 2000s chick-flicks and the romance novels which seem to consume the back corners of public libraries. I'd hate to believe that any further meaning of existence is bound to a relationship with a beautiful other.

But at the same time, I suppose that if I am to live life most deeply and colorfully, I must find some equilibrium between the opposing sides of fantastical lovely naivete and the petty cynicism of uncomfortable loneliness. After all, the only other place aside from heaven where I am safe from the wrath of love, is hell.