

THE ENIGMA OF BROTHERLY LOVE

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There is probably no problem with more relevance for mankind as a whole than the definition and measurement of conditions conducive to the growth of brotherly love. Yet this topic is one which elicits mainly lip service at the most. Subtle disdain is more characteristic of the sophisticated 20th Century reaction to the word. For example, love itself, as the concept is used in our civilization, is an abstraction frequently connoting "a multitude of sins" or mixed meanings (e.g., greed, dependency). In the behavioral sciences, the person evincing curiosity and puzzlement about the genesis and value of brotherly love has all too often been regarded as a singular aberration suffering from "do-goodism" and puritanical repressions. Such a reaction would not prevail had we not unconsciously incorporated society's faith in the sanctity of the easily measurable and the physiological. Even these with a humanistic orientation occasionally dogmatically state that such a process as love intrinsically defies measurement.¹ Apparently such a protest overlooks the fact that psychological research is developing techniques for evaluating the single case in a longitudinal fashion rather than relying entirely upon group results. Yet it is my contention that love has not been explored by behavioral scientists principally from a failure to see its value in the realities of human existence. Until very recently psychological needs have not been considered,² while status and prestige went to the scientist who dealt with the time-honored physiological methodologies. Yet as Jung³ aptly stated, there is no logical reason to assume that psychological needs are not ephemeral epiphenomena of the physical.

Since the disciplines of religion, psychology, and psychiatry are composed of people with varying theories or philosophies of man, depending upon their own experiences and training, it probably is unrealistic to expect unanimity of opinion on the presnet utility of specific scientific concepts. What is more logical and more healthy is to develop less rigidity and avoidance in conceptualization and more puzzlement about man in general. Heterogeneity with the disciplines is evidenced by the intellectual walls constructed and maintained by adherents of special theoretical interests. For example, witness the love-for-God vs. love-for-man issue in religion, and the physiological research-in-animals vs. psychological research-in-man dichotomy in psychology.

Since the concept of "Universal Man" is not a characteristic of our intellectual climate, it is naive to think in the generalities of "ministers believe..." or "psychologists main-

tain..." It is even more chimerical to think in such broad terms as "theologians and behavioral scientists agree that..." The main point of all this is to state that the views of people personally committed to the serious study of love are largely influenced by their personal experience, for better or for worse. This state of affairs will continue until science can tell us with incontrovertible evidence that one ethic communicated in such-and-such a manner will lend to desirable psychological developments (e.g., identities, value system of the individual). This may be one of the factors that has relegated love to a rather sterile cliché rather than a dynamic force for human betterment.

One of the pioneers in this exploration, Erich Fromm,⁴ offers a classification of love into the subtypes of mother, father, brother, erotic, and love for God. In his generic sense love has the attributes of respect, knowledge, care and responsibility. In the end, the concept is still highly abstract with little thought as to how these attributes are communicated to transform a "thing" into a "thou."

At the present time there seems to be no substitute for participation with the whole human being to impress one with the value of brotherly love and its concrete expression, good works. There is probably no better laboratory for this interaction than the controversial mental hospital, if one can break out of the confines of structured interviews and the splitting of man into glands, chemicals, isolated structures, and physiological drives. One cannot deny that the overriding importance of "matters of consequence" makes opportunities for this invaluable training for the minister and doctor extremely rare. We seem to be the victim of our techniques and are loath to venture far from their false securities.

Since I have been granted the chance for informal experimentation with methods of psychotherapy in a setting of hospitalized schizophrenics over the last 13 years,^{5,6} I would like to state a few tentative thoughts in hopes of putting brotherly love and good works on solid interpersonal ground.

1) Brotherly love and good works depend on the presence of oversight (understanding of the state of the other person's needs, fears, and hopes). Traditional psychotherapy generally centers on the inner state of the client. That is, the therapist assists the client to arrive at insight into the history of his troubles and the personal dynamics of his present unsatisfied needs in hopes that liberation of positive forces for growth will result. There is very little emphasis upon the neglected fact that lowered self-esteem generates psychological disturbances and self-esteem is built upon by the good will of others. Perhaps we therapists have been guilty of a touch of grandiosity, believing our incentive value to be so great as to buoy up any or all feelings of unworth through a verbal "laying on of hands." By learning to reduce psychological tensions of others (e.g., need

for understanding, need for belonging), one can usually gain approval and esteem from others. It is a very rare individual who can rely mainly upon inner approval for satisfaction (following actions congruous with his value system) rather than depend upon the good will of others. Of course, if such inner-directed people harbor a non-humanitarian value system, then mankind undergoes far more suffering, as history amply demonstrates.

2) How do I know if my works are Good or Bad? This is not an easy question to answer, except in the extreme case when physical danger and suffering of the other are obvious. A thorough search into this question would go far beyond the scope of this paper and would involve intricacies of both personality and learning theory. Many of the ills of the world might be attributed to reliance upon the effects of punishment rather than good example or identification model.⁷ Punishment might stop an act but only lead to more intensely hostile acts and hatred of the arbitrary punisher.⁸ Yet it is common to see punishment passing for good works (under the guise of being "therapeutic").

Learning theory tells us that when we reward an action (by reducing a person's tension), it is more likely to recur. So in a very literal sense we are partially responsible for his actions. We are faced with the dilemma of whether such an action is good or bad, in the long view, for optimal development of an individual's potential for "love and work."

3) Psychologists and ministers are faced with considerable ignorance about the effects of brotherly love and good works. Psychotherapists, as a rule, are inclined to blame parents for the "lack of love" in child rearing. This hostility is precipitated chiefly by perceiving the blame to rest with hostile-sexual "unconscious wishes" on the part of the parents. Few of us⁹ have been sufficiently explorative to see that parents, like the rest of us, have problems of esteem--and perhaps operate on a wrong theory of methods of communicating love and goals to others. In other words, honest ignorance instead of disguised malevolence might be operating in many regressive relationships.

We live in times of relative ignorance of human problems, and mankind has suffered by our failure to acknowledge this truth. Knowledge of love--its growth and value--will probably follow the efforts of those who are committed to its importance and are capable of accepting the insight of many disciplines. We also know little about how to apply brotherly love to help others, especially those whose life style is directed toward finding reasons for hating others. Just "love" is not enough?

Summary

The concept of brotherly love and its concrete expression have been examined for possible leads out of our present stage of relative ignorance. In addition to their theological importance, brotherly love and good works are therapeutic concepts which should be of paramount importance to all concerned with mental

health. Lack of knowledge about these basic and neglected concepts will probably be overcome only by increasing research and making possible ease of communication between the helping disciplines.

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