

Chapter 4



The Predicament of the Loving Heart

Everyone is born with an open heart, ready to give and receive love. This is our natural true state. Very soon in life, however, the love we first receive as infants begins to be given and withheld intentionally by our parents as reward or punishment. Society does this, again, to make us conform to its requirements. Consequently, little by little, we forget what it means to have love without conditions attached, or that is not used to make us behave in a certain way. By the time we are old enough to form intimate relationships, it is no longer possible to love in a natural and innocent way.

The child is soon taught how, “for his own good,” he should be insensitive to others, and how he should barricade himself from being hurt. He further learns to simulate love in the form of pretended affection and flattery, to be accepted and to gain selfish ends. Thus love becomes, in his mind, something to be used to get what he wants. Through the development of his

ego, the child becomes further isolated from the innocently loving person that he was originally, and thus becomes insulated from any true love of others.

The barriers that result from this development make any meaningful relationship difficult, and the painful disappointments that result only further increase distrust. Becoming ever more isolated and rigidified, our hearts, as it were, become enclosed within an iron maiden that keeps others out and suffocates us from within.

Eventually, through grasping love selfishly and returning it only when absolutely necessary, even the little bit of love that comes to us soon disappears. Through repeating this isolating process over and over, people lose contact with their true selves altogether, and become hardened, hollow, egocentric, and vacant ego creatures, unable to care for others. This hollowness and alienation from the true self is experienced as a lack of self-worth that constantly needs the recognition, justification, and verification of others. This need is so oppressive that it drives many to drugs and alcohol, or to endless diversion in entertainment, or to constantly making their presence felt, by whatever means. To fulfill such needs, people pay attention to everyone else's business but their own, or look everywhere but within themselves for the causes of their troubles. This hollowness is the source of envy, greed, self-righteousness, and feelings of aggression.

Nearly all social decadence has its roots in this process by which people lose their true selves and end up with shut-off hearts. Drug dealers, whose business it is to offer substitutes for true nourishment, are quick to recognize people's unsatisfied longing.

In spite of the prevalence of such decadent influences, there always survive those who are able to keep their hearts open

and loving. By some miracle they remain able to love without losing themselves in the process. These people seem to be able to develop the inner balance that enables them to continually enrich the lives of those around them. One recognizes in them that they possess the grace of being able to see good in everyone, and to cling to this good as potential, regardless of what shows in their external behavior. Such individuals seem to recognize that others' negative characteristics are only a charade that conceals their true selves. Alan Watts described this ability as the chief quality of the true guru, whose job, he said, is to awaken you to your true self, when you are ready to be awakened. When your ego is active, the guru says, in effect, "That is not you," and when your true self surfaces he says, with love and kindness, "Ah, that is really you."

There are still others who love openly, but to their harm. They fail to discriminate that the love they give to another's ego is the throwaway of self suggested in Hex. 64, Line 6, as "drunken love."

Contrary to popular belief, love is not to be given unconditionally, but only when the other is sincere, sensitive, and just. Its Cosmic purpose is to add to the growth and development of the beloved's true self, not to flatter and develop the ego.

The energy or impulse to love is a free-flowing energy to extend kindness and generosity to the beloved, as well as to others farther afield. If this energy is not to become exhausted, it must meet with reciprocity, so that love completes a circuit. Then the energy is constantly renewed. The reciprocity must be equal for this to happen, otherwise the energy drains off, becomes exhausted, and dies. To love and be loved, in the intimate relationship, is to be healthy and complete, each in himself. This completed energy circuit is similar to the human body cell, which, when healthy, has a completed and

self-contained electrical circuit. Unhealthy cells, such as cancer cells, have interrupted, incomplete electrical circuits. The giving and receiving of love is the highest form of such energy circuits.

Because true love exists only between two people's true selves, there already is a complete and constant reciprocity on the inner level, even though it may not be consciously apparent to either. This inner relationship is secure, in and of itself, therefore there needs to be no search for security. Their approval of each other is complete, therefore there is no need to be recognized and valued, and no need for any orchestrated responses. Nor is there any need for either to exercise any degree of conscious effort on this level of relating. All their relating is spontaneous and intrinsic.

Outwardly, however, reciprocity exists only when both egos are displaced, and this may not always be the case. It is necessary, therefore, that the way one relates to the other be dependent on whether his ego is present and active, or absent, as there can be no true relationship between one's true self and another's ego. Whenever we give ourselves in an open loving way to the other while his ego is in control, we throw ourselves away and damage our self-esteem. It is the nature of the ego to always seek ways of dominating and interfering in the love relationship. It is necessary, therefore, to keep aware of both egos, so that when they appear, one's response is appropriate. If the other, for example, is insensitive, failure to note this fact and retreat from an open warmth sends his ego the message that such behavior is acceptable, and will be rewarded.

Retreat, it needs to be noted, is not meant to be a closure of the heart. It is rather a retreat from warmth and loving to an inner neutrality, where one remains until the other returns to sincerity and openness. If one has allowed the heart to close,

reopening it requires a conscious decision that, when made, frees love's energy to once more flow outward. Failure to reopen the heart when the other is sincere and open damages the relationship.

Wise loving means responding according to the degree of reciprocity offered. It requires tuning one's awareness to where the other "is." When the other relates with sensitivity and sincerity, we are free to go forward to meet him. This assumes, of course, that we, too, are sensitive and sincere. This awareness is such that at the slightest hint of change that tells us the other is opening or closing, we open or close accordingly. (See Hex. 55, Lines 1-6.) This is the reciprocity that is necessary to create the environment in which love can be expressed safely, and in a mutually healthy way. In the *I Ching*, this principle is called "coming to meet halfway." (Hex. 44)

In this regard, it is necessary to distinguish between sincerity and orchestrated responses. We are taught to show love, kindness, and consideration, as good manners, social grace, and a means to success. We learn to expect others to perform these social graces in relating to us. The ego expects this in the love situation. Such orchestrated responses, however, are not the sincerity and sensitivity referred to here, that come from the inner self. The orchestrated response is mixed up with intention, and a desire to control the situation for the ego's benefit. Performing in this way obscures true feelings. Expecting others to perform similarly keeps us from understanding their true feelings. Because it is against the lover's inner dignity to perform according to his beloved's ego expectations, many of the misunderstandings lovers have revolve around this issue. Lovers can give the gifts of love freely only when the beloved does not wait with his hand out in expectation, or in the chiding stance, "You ought to...."

Given the way we are brought up, a true reciprocity is not immediately possible in many relationships. This is because the patriarchal tradition has prohibited the true equality that must exist between partners in love. Interestingly, during the mating period preceding ordinary marriages, there is no presumption of a hierarchy in the relationship. Often the opposite happens after marriage. Until very recently, it was the common law in the United States that women “owed” it to their husbands to submit to their sexual demands; failure to do so could cause the woman to lose her rights in a divorce. Although this situation may no longer legally exist, the attitude that people have such rights still exists. Such attitudes destroy the spontaneity and equality that is essential to the free-willed love relationship.

Equality is also necessary to the environment in which love can be safely expressed, otherwise the one who gives too much becomes exhausted, while the one receiving without giving becomes sated and restless. Wise loving requires that we observe these and other elements essential to love. Failure to do so will interfere with or even destroy love.

If the lovers rush into the relationship before certain reservations of attitude have been allowed to surface and be dealt with, the trust that is necessary to the environment of love will remain incomplete. (Hex. 53.) Deeply rooted trust comes from a slow maturing of inner feelings. Superficial trust will contain hidden, “Let’s see” elements that imply that if things do not go well, one can back out. When trust is incomplete, both remain on guard and their suspicions block the sincere effort both need to put into the development of their relationship.

Those who love indiscriminately, rush into intimacy repeatedly before a safe environment for love has been established.

They do this believing that their love will be strong enough to bear all burdens, such as the other's doubts and burnout generated by previous relationships. Also, ego elements that have not been disciplined surface in intense struggles for dominance.

When one of a couple manages to dominate, the couple is prevented from attaining the humility that deepens their love and secures it on the inner plane. Like all alive growing things, love has a natural progression and development that leads to maturation. If this progression is neglected or bypassed, inequality and injustice will characterize the relationship. Then neither of the lovers will be able to complete the development of their true selves that love is meant to serve. The gift of love carries with it the Cosmic responsibility to love correctly, and that is why failing to do so creates suffering.

Loving wisely, then, means that it is necessary for lovers to approach each other carefully and conscientiously. The very beginning is the time when it is most possible to build this basis. The lovers will need to proceed carefully and thoughtfully, with neither catering to the other's ego, nor compromising on important principles. If they patiently see this time through to its completion, potential problems will gradually dissolve as trust grows. When this trust is complete, they will be able to open up to each other freely and safely.