

## **PART ONE: THEORY**

### **CHAPTER ONE**

#### **MEANINGS OF LOVE**

*In this Chapter I explain my use of Ruddick's 'reflective assessment of feeling' (Ruddick 1989) as an exemplar. Then I go on to summarise my meanings of love as these were clarified over the course of my inquiry. I illustrate my findings with drawings, a photograph and a CD-ROM.*

#### **MY INQUIRING APPROACH**

My aim was to bring my experience of love into the social world in a practical way. I chose an action research frame for my inquiry for this reason, because it is explicit in its focus on practical knowledge, and on improving practice. I also chose to put love at the forefront, and at the centre of my inquiry. I decided to let love influence my sensemaking because I wanted love to actively influence the way that I work with others. My initial question was 'How can I be guided by love in my inquiry?'

Action researchers recognise the importance and relevance of both values and subjectivity, but I could not find an action research exemplar on which to model my inquiry. Putting love at the centre of my research practice, I had already begun writing subjective accounts of my experience of love based on my journals. The excerpt below will give the reader an example of how I was writing, putting words to embodied sensation.

'From a young age, if I had the idea that something was not 'right' that feeling of 'not rightness' came from my body. If the words 'I love you' or 'I am very angry' were said, I would decide what that meant and whether or not the statement was 'true' from the way I felt physically on hearing them. Then I would make a distinction between what I understood to be the intended meaning of utterance and my feeling response in order to decide the truth of the statement. It was a way of experiential knowing that identified meaning by aligning the words with

bodily responses and it enabled me to make meaning out of confusion' (See Chapter Five, p. 128).

In the course of writing Chapter Five I sought justification for my approach in eastern Buddhist philosophy (Verala, Thompson and Roche, 1991), in feminist constructs of gendered identities (Weedon, 1987) and in the philosophy of Spinoza (Damasio, 2003). I was particularly drawn to the philosophy of Spinoza because he advocated the deliberate cultivation of joyfulness. This was important because I had been deliberately cultivating my sensed memories of love, and allowing my writing to be influenced as fully as possible by the sensations of love.

However, these ideas were more intellectual than practical, and I wanted to ground my inquiry in my everyday life. Then, as I was browsing in a bookshop, the title 'Maternal Thinking' (Ruddick, 1989) caught my eye.

## THE TRANSFORMATIONAL NATURE OF LOVE

### Thinking and acting through love

Ruddick (1989) defines loving activity in various ways. She writes of love as connecting thought with feeling which then leads into action. Whilst recognising that there are many ways of thinking that are not imbued with emotional components, she considers that in protecting and nurturing their children mothers think like this:

'Feelings cry out for thought; hence reflective assessment of feeling is a defining relational activity of mothers' (Ruddick, 1989 p. 70)

She demonstrates how the qualities of love underpin and influence mothering activity. She makes it clear that not all mothers act lovingly all the time, that some mothers are unable to care for their children in this way, and that the term 'mother' refers to adults who look after children in a mothering capacity, but who are not inevitably the biological mother or necessarily female.

She defines preservative love as seeking to work with the child's personality, with the way the child sees the world. It is a way of thinking through feeling, which is focussed on giving the child what it needs in terms of education, training and security. Thinking through feeling then develops in the process of carrying out, and then reflecting on, her mothering acts.

Ruddick says:

'To foster growth is to nurture a child's developing spirit.' (Ruddick, 1989 p. 82)

Fostering growth means creating the context in which the child can grow and learn, and which necessitates a 'welcoming response to change' (ibid. p. 89). Ruddick's writing showed me how love between mother and child enabled the child to develop. I began to see how, by the cultivation of loving feeling, I could use this transformational energy to guide the direction of my inquiry.

Ruddick demonstrate through examples, how the mother encourages the uneven, inevitable and unpredictable growth of the child through her actions and her stories. Her role is to understand the child's needs, and to provide comfort and explanation. It is to ensure the child's safety as well as provide opportunities for experimentation, to give support without being too close, to encourage individuality and teach the child how to share. In order to do this the mother must appreciate both the unique viewpoint and capacity of the child.

Similarly in her study of the way women work in organisations Fletcher (Fletcher 1999) suggests that women show a tendency to care for work projects in a similar way to caring for children. She coins the phrase 'relational practice' to describe a range of skills and activities that are used in a work settings, which are often unnoticed, and which create connections between individual and teams that are necessary to achieve project goals.

What differentiates preserving behaviour from other categories of relational practice is the focus on task and the relational representation of this focus as one of protection, nurturing and connecting. In this way, preserving activities are similar to what Sara Ruddick calls "preservative love" one of the three practices underlying maternal thinking. Although it might seem strange to think of the relationship between engineer and a project as similar to the relationship between mother and child there are number of similarities that make it an interesting analogy. In terms of dependency, the project, like the child, cannot take care of itself. By the same token, the worker, like the mother, depends on the survival of the project to continue to define herself as a worker' (Fletcher 1999, p. 51).

In organisations, Fletcher also refers to growth-promoting behaviours as relational activity,

'a blending of attending to the individual – creating growth fostering conditions *within* people - and concern for the collective – creating growth-fostering conditions *between* people' (Fletcher, 2001, p. 81).

Fletcher and Ruddick's' writing showed me how the invisible can be made visible, how values can significantly influence action, and they gave me the confidence to pursue my love-inspired thoughts and believe that my subjective writing would eventually have practical consequences.

In critiquing Fletcher and Ruddick, Barbara Thayer-Bacon (Thayer-Bacon, 2003) agrees with Rorty that in privileging experience and by comparing themselves with prevailing models, feminists can imply that they have access to a superior and deeper reality. This is not my intention. I do not take a gendered perspective. In writing and inquiring into the connections between love and practice I seek to develop an ungendered relational epistemology and practice.

There are other instances where growth through love is made explicit in a non-gendered educational context. Love has been put at the centre of a course entitled 'The Chain of Hearts' designed by Humberto Maturana and Sima Nisis (in Bunnall and Forsythe 2001). This is a short experiential course for teachers, where the transformational capacity of love is justified in this way:

'Living in love constitutes well being, as one lives in a fluid dynamic congruence with one's circumstances, whatever they are. In the absence of love an organism lives the continuous breakdown of those systemic coherences. ... As compensation takes place, the proper bodily configuration for the relational dynamic of love does not easily arise spontaneously, but may be evoked by the configuration of the medium; that is, through being engaged by another being which generates the appropriate relational space. The appropriate relational space' might be friendship, or therapy. In this way relational practice becomes the 'carrier for the relational space of love' (Bunnall and Forsythe 2001, p.157).

## CLARIFYING THE MEANINGS OF LOVE

As I continued with my reflective writing, the meaning of love was clarified. In Chapter Five that I began to delineate the three different aspects of love on which I decided to base my inquiry. My discernment process is re-presented in this excerpt from Chapter Five:

'The spiritual path is a process of self-development, which takes place through the medium of love and I intuitively feel that this love is carried on the rhythm of the Cosmic Tides... Wilber (1995) goes on to name the inflowing breath or homeward movement as Eros, it is the 'ascending' movement, the love that pulls the love of the Many towards the love of the One, the Universal Soul. In today's cultural terms, Eros is the focussed ascending masculine one-pointed passionate loving. The outflowing breath is its opposite, the descending flow of love, or Agape, from the One to the Many, and might be typified as the feminine, the compassionate, finding of love-in-relationship, embracing love... Wilber (1995) refers to Agape as Grace. He goes on to link the descending tide of love with the compassion of the Buddha, and the ascending tide of Eros with the Universal 'Brahman' of Hinduism. But this 'vast circle of love' is not some kind of cosmic iteration in cosmic soup, it is the soup itself. And with the collapse of the dual aspects of love comes the realisation that the movement of the tides is also love itself' (Chapter Five, p. 156).

I then wrote Chapter Seven, reflecting on an account of practice by holding this sense of eros as a part of myself. Then I wrote Chapter Eight using this same method but with an embodied sense of agape, and similarly in Chapter Ten wrote holding a sense of divine love as this collapse of the duality of eros and agape, as the fullness of love itself.

By inquiring in this way I developed my own meanings, and they are summarised here in the following paragraphs.

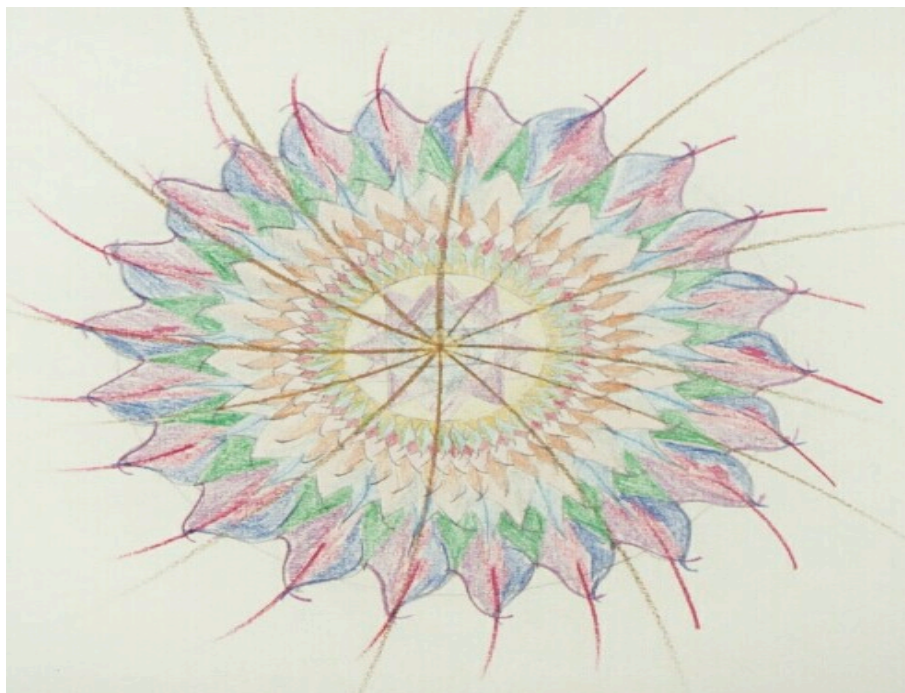
### EROS

My embodied sense of the transformatory nature of love is disclosed through a developing awareness of how the body, mind and emotions resonate to form meaning. How this inner resonance then connects with the world around me is represented in the drawing where eros is at the centre of the many petalled lotus

flower. Feeling through thinking, I became imbued with an erotic longing and commitment to spiritual practice.

When this feeling was translated into my leadership practice, I found that eros connected with idealism and this passion could be compared with the emphasis placed on organisational vision and mission.

'So what is this passion, this idealism and how does it link to mundane organisational life? Apart from helping to get me out of bed in the morning I used idealism as a tool that had instrumental value so that envisioning idealistic outcomes could usefully produce not only co-operation between staff but also bring benefit to others. Mine were idealistic visions that assumed that joining up to the cause could bring about worthy and practical effects' (Chapter Seven, p. 197)

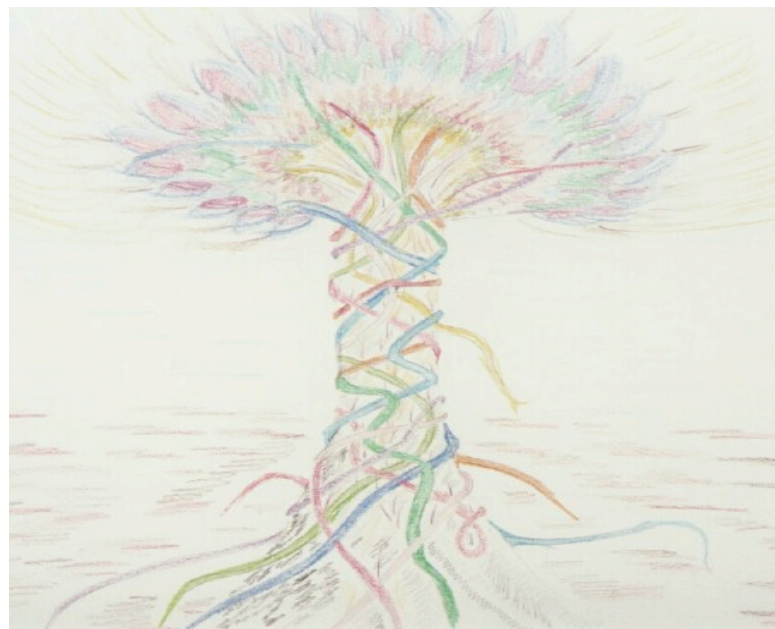


### **Eros at the Heart of Action**

As I reflected on my leadership practice through this erotic lens, my thoughts became polarised around the challenges generated by eros. Reflecting on my account of practice and developing my sensed memories of the loving meanings underlying my work, I took pleasure in this contradictory dynamic.

'But eros produces reaction, and not all are collaborative responses. Those people who worked in the Finance department, who never (or very rarely) saw either the properties or the tenants were not motivated primarily by the desire to house the homeless, but rather a desire to get the records of income and expenditure correct. They were more conscious of how staff filled in (or did not fill in) the finance forms, or being pestered by contractors impatient for their payments' (Chapter Seven, p. 199).

As I reflected on these contrasts, I drew the 'Dynamic of Contradiction' expressed as the underside of the lotus flower, with the energy of the contradictions becoming entwined around the stem through which the sap rises to feed the flower.



### **The Dynamic of Contradiction**

I maintained that if eros is subject to contradiction, this brings new understandings and provides energy for change. I represented the new understanding that can arise through organisational conflict by drawing the clash of values across various policy decisions to show how these contradictions affect the decisions made. I drew a conclusion: that desire must be controlled if eros is to be generative.



'The strength of passion cannot be controlled just by the Law, or by administration of justice or by punishment, by the dance of duty and generosity. These are external constraints. I must also learn control internally ... My question to anyone taking a teaching or mentoring role in developing leadership skills based on either spiritual beliefs or spiritual disciplines would be, 'Are you master of eros, are you in control of your senses?' (Chapter Seven, p.214).

## AGAPE

In Chapter eight, preparing to write about relationships at work, I gave an account of a critical incident and represented contradiction within organisation in the drawing below:



### Mapping a Critical Incident

As I looked through the lens of agape, I saw it enacted as acceptance of other in relationship as learning to step into another's shoes, perhaps to act out of

character. Agape's extreme became mental plasticity, the dissolution of personality into another. This was the ultimate surrender<sup>1</sup>.



### The Practises of Love

I began to understand that the mental plasticity needed for this surrender could be learned through the embodied experience of yoga practise, and this was how I experienced the logic of love. By developing my capacity to turn my conventional world upside down I opened to possibility of becoming an instrument of love's purpose.

Because my way of knowing is primarily embodied, changing the shape and position of my posture is important. I inquired into my body / mind connection in Chapter Six, where I reflected on how I learned to do headstand and considered what this told me about the way that I learn.

<sup>1</sup> By 'surrender' I mean giving up habitual ways of living in the world, considered as an intrinsic aspect of Hindu spiritual practice.



### **Practising headstand**

This picture shows my practise, and became a metaphor for the unconventional hermeneutical and phenomenological nature of my inquiry.

'The 3<sup>rd</sup> Limb (of yoga) is *asana*, learning control of the body through postures. 'Learning control' is a critical phrase. It does not mean the brain instructing the body, verbally saying 'do this, do that' and the body obeying. It means letting the body show me what it can do' (Chapter Six, p. 173).

By setting out to allow love to influence my reflections on my practice I deliberately skewed my inquiry to unearth that which lies beneath my professional practice. I asked, how do I know and how do I learn? Do I come to know through my thoughts, through my interaction with others, through my embodied senses? How can I alter my actions? In altering action, which comes first, altered thought, altered responses to others, altered bodily sensation? As I sought answers to these questions, I came to understand that I make meaning through the direct experience of my senses, that my understanding of the world is phenomenological.

### **DIVINE LOVE**

I use the word 'divine' as a linguistic descriptor that points to that which is beyond socially constructed meaning. It is 'a more transcendent existent beyond reason' (Tarnas 1991, p.84). In this thesis I resisted fixing the meaning of 'divine' other than saying that the divine is 'good', that it is beyond cognition, and that it can be intuited but is not directly perceptible via the physical senses.

My sensed memory of divine love emanates from my experience when being taught meditation 20 years ago, the meaning of which has been developing since that time. This is my story:

'In 1984, by chance, I met someone who practised meditation. I had already started playing relaxation tapes for myself, as a way of recovering from drug withdrawal, and I knew meditation was an even better way of relaxing. I pestered this person asking to be taught meditation, and 7 months later was given a meditation technique.

It was during this teaching that I came awake, just like Sleeping Beauty, touched lightly and softly by love as I meditated. Love broke through my fear and because of this acceptance; forgiveness and hope flowered within me' (Chapter Five, p. 124).

I see the divine in relation to a divine intelligence, the source of which does not emanate from the material world. Again, I do not fix the meaning of 'divine intelligence' in my inquiring. However, I do make references to divine intelligence in particular cultural contexts. For example, in Christian terms this intelligence is God (Lewis, 1960), in Hindu terms it is Krishna or Brahman (Iyengar, 1966), in Bhuddism it is Suchness (Wilber, 1995), for Plotinus it is The One (Tarnas 1991).

I experience divine intelligence as a loving energy that I call 'divine love' and that I think of as coming from God. Others have different referents, Jack Whitehead calls love 'life affirming energy' (Whitehead, 2003). Whatever referent is used I made an assumption that divine love is always represented culturally and will be experienced personally in a unique and individual way.

CS Lewis (Lewis, 1960) distinguishes between Gift-love, 'which moves a man to work and plan and save for the future well-being of his family which he will die without sharing or seeing' and Need love 'which sends a lonely or frightened child to its mother's arms' (Lewis 1960 p.1). Both of these loves are 'Natural loves' (Lewis 1960 p.165) and are embedded in the way we live our lives and which arise through relationship with others. CS Lewis defines divine love sourced from God, who is not interested in the everyday. This divine love transforms Gift love into a capacity for loving the unlovable, and transforms Need Love into a longing for God, and this neediness makes us receptive to grace and to the possibility of transformation.

Following Lewis, in Chapter Five, I clarified the meaning of divine love by comparing it what I know of human love.

'Divine Love transforms Gift love into a capacity for loving the unlovable, and transforms Need Love into a longing for God, and this neediness makes us receptive to Grace and the possibility of transformation.

I think that this is what happened in my meditation teaching, which gave me a different, unconditional acceptance of who I was, unencumbered by place or function or cultural frame. At that time the meditation teacher did not know me; we had no previous connection except for the teaching itself. That is why I am calling this experience 'divine', it was a gift from the unknown, it was unconnected with any previous experiences, and it enabled me to love myself where I had previously considered myself to be unlovable' (Chapter Five, p. 127).

## THE TRANSMISSION OF LOVE

As my inquiry progressed, the question became, 'How do I communicate what I am learning? How do I pedagogise my knowledge of love?' Some possibilities ran through my head: could I use loving words, or say words with feeling, or talk directly about love and loving? None of these actions seemed quite appropriate, and some seemed degenerative and even potentially abusive. I had always been cautious about directly bringing spiritual into working practices. This is my memory of how I learned this at, a time when I was using affirmations on a daily basis:

I talked with Nita (personnel officer) about how we might deal with the problem of x's (staff member) attendance record. I had been using the phrase 'Forgiveness is the key to happiness' as my affirmation for the day. Every time she said something I disagreed with, I said to myself, 'Forgiveness is the key to happiness' before replying. Then later I was told that she had seriously considered taking out a grievance against me for racist behaviour! It must have been because of the way I used those affirmations...

As part of my ongoing inquiry several people agreed to take part in video'd conversations. This was an open-ended exercise intended to highlight what a 'good conversation' might consist of. The outcome was unexpected!

I had a conversation with my husband (Paul) in front of the camera. The form and style of our conversation we have had many times before. Not only do we not agree, we cannot agree on the meanings of words. In the CD-ROM included with this submission we are talking about space. I am talking about the ever-moving space of inclusionality<sup>2</sup>; he is talking about scientific definitions of what space is.

He is being critical, tense, shouting, elaborating his point of view and showing how ridiculous my understanding is. I am listening very closely, because I know that what he is saying is important. In most people's eyes what he says is 'true' and certainly verifiable by scientific method. I am laughing, because we are repeating old patterns and wriggle as I might, I cannot escape.

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<sup>2</sup> I am referring here to Rayner's theories, discussed in the next Chapter

When Mad and Jack<sup>3</sup> saw this, they said that Paul's attitude and language was abusive. This is what Mad wrote in an email:

'The story depends on the fact, for me, that Paul is your husband and you live together. This is not just any person. He is the man in your life. Any viewer, including me, imagines their own view of what a loving relationship might look like when they think the words 'husband;' or 'man I live with'. The shocking thing about the video is how abusive it feels when you watch it...' (Madeline Church, private email communication 15.11.04)

I had not found the conversation abusive; I wanted to listen to what Paul was saying. I value what he says, not the way that he says it. As he is speaking I hold a sense of love in my body; it is an embodied vision. I stayed in touch with a sense memory of how Paul is willing to help me by agreeing to have a video'd conversation. I began to understand this as the tacit enaction of eros. Because we live together I have tried to understand how he sees the world; I have tried to get under his skin. I want to understand how he uses language and emotion so that we can communicate better. I began to understand this is as the tacit enaction of agape.

It was Mad and Jack pointing to it that enabled me to name (rather than feel) my embodied knowing. I had held sensed the memory of love, but in an 'unthinking' way. [Bernstein refers to 'the unthinkable' as meanings consumed by context (in Bernstein 2000, p.31)]<sup>4</sup>. Now I could see love coming through my action, and see how it influenced and maintained the connection between us, despite Paul's frustration. It was this recognition that helped me to summarise my reflections on eros and agape and then develop my ideas about a pedagogy of presence in Chapter Nine.

'Learning with love through action is an internal reordering that enables my tacit knowledge to come into action without my necessarily thinking about it. Love is invisible and implicitly held as I perceive the relation between 'the impulse to move and the movement ... the intention to think and an impulse to think' (Bohm, 1996 p.25). This tacit reordering enables love to pass through my intention and

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<sup>3</sup> Mad is Madeline Church, a member of my University Peer Group, and Jack is Jack Whitehead, my Supervisor at the University of Bath.

<sup>4</sup> Bernstein's theories of pedagogic communication are covered in the next Chapter.

into action within the pedagogic relation, and by writing and reflecting, I have made this tacit knowledge explicit' (Chapter Nine, p. 260).

On a later occasion this clip was presented to a group of fourteen people in Jack's Monday evening conversation group. Almost everyone saw this conversation as abusive where love's presence could be acknowledged. There was one dissenter.

Later, having asked her to say more about what she saw in the video, I received the following comment:

'In the video clip I thought I saw two people who were obviously very comfortable with each other having one of those conversations where one of them was exasperated by the other. I didn't feel that one was rejecting the other or even being abusive, as it was the ideas raised that he seemed to reject, not the person explaining them. My assumption would be that this was done in a relationship experiencing love. ... I have loving relationships in which disagreements and hard words are contained and accepted because the relationship is more important and the disagreements are aired in a spirit of trust, safety and acceptance. (Erica Holley, Private email communication 5.3.2005)

Whilst Erica acknowledged the presence of a loving relationship, she did not see the pedagogic transmission of love, but does see 'two people who are obviously very comfortable with each other.' Erica's perspective issued a challenge to my claim that love can be transmitted through a pedagogy of presence.

I needed to make a judgement, to decide how her point of view would influence my claim. Mad and Jack had seen this pedagogic transmission and 13 other people had acknowledged it in a subsequent discussion. I reflected on Erica's challenge in this way:

'I make decisions by noticing my bodily responses. Noticing the resonances, I follow their direction and try to act in unison with this sensuous awareness. If I can keep an inner / outer awareness then I can follow the inner sensing into the outer action. I can tell whether I have been 'true' to that initial intention by the direction that the next movement takes me to, the next iteration of the flow. This is how I assess whether my action is 'good' enough, whether my inner logic has



been integrated into my outer actions. This is a process of realisation, a process of 'seeing' and is non-verbal' (Chapter Six, p. 178).

I have defined a pedagogy of presence as comprising a tacit pedagogical relation, that is, as 'a modification ...of knowledge or a practice occurs where neither members may be aware of it' (Bernstein, 2000 p.200). Taking this together with the noumenal quality of love itself, with the responses of 15 other people, with my resonant inward responses, I decided that my claim - to be able to become an instrument of love's purpose through a pedagogy of presence – was legitimate and had been represented in the video.