

The Texts of the Convivium

THE CONSTELLATION OF LOVE

“I love” should not be confused with “I like”. Something gives me pleasure when I see it and I establish a contact and relationship with it, whereas pleasure is sensation or feeling that remains in my private circle.

We can also obtain pleasure from another person. Let’s say we like this person. The fact of contemplating his or her beauty could provoke a feeling of pleasure within us, just as admiring his virtues or rejoicing in his company or appreciating his conversation or being seen with him or her could. Or having sexual relations with that person. Up until now, in the strict sense, pleasure and not love is in question. Here each one of the two subjects satisfies themselves but no communion is established. They have so called intimate relationships, which have nothing at all to do with intimate.

Love is towards another person, with whom one enters into a relationship. One identifies oneself with the other person. In a certain manner one takes part in his or her life. One takes part in the joys of that person, in his wishes, ambitions, pains, frustrations and anguish. One experiences all these feelings as ones own. And yet one feels them as those belonging to another, as feelings that aren’t personal in a full and exclusive sense.

I can pursue egoistic purposes, I can place my ego at the centre of the universe, but strictly speaking I can’t love myself. Narcisuss fell in love with his own image that was reflected in the water, but then he died from the pain at not being able to reach it. This means that he was split into two and had fallen in love with another.

Also a woman, who lives for her own beauty to the point of subjecting herself to almost any form of torture, has, in the end, split herself in half. She has fallen in love with another woman, until the point of total donation.

Alterity is essential to love. It demands the presence of another. So how can one fall in love with this other person? A good question and quite a problem, we might as well admit it’s a mystery.

It’s a human phenomenon, whose bases are to be found in that evolution from which man derives. Let’s consider, amongst the animals, the dedication and devotion that a mother shows for her young, to the point of sacrificing herself for them.

It’s a vital instinct, aimed at the survival of the species. But a vital logic also governs the act of falling in love, which in superior evolutionary stages becomes literature and poetry arriving at expressing itself in the *Dolce Stil Novo*, in Dante and Petrarca.

In the highest degrees one emerges from any instrumental logic to reach a love that is an end in itself.

A person attracts us, interests us; and it comes naturally to us to think about this person, to know something about him or her and then something more in order to be able to follow her life by travelling along the same tracks.

It’s also nice to be able to increase these identifications. By beginning to make friends with those people who are closer and more alike to us, one can “adopt” others along the way until we dedicate a more careful thought to those people who are different to us, who are strangers and – let’s say – less friendly. In this way one could

reach the point of looking at an increasing amount of people with benevolent eyes, at most, to seeing every human being as such.

I mentioned that love is a relationship with other people. Now, in studying more deeply the idea of that which the person is in his heart of hearts, in his mystery, one can gradually discover his unlimited wealth.

It is his infinite wealth that makes the person potentially loveable in infinite measures, despite his conditionings, his limits, his defects, the faults that constrain him, that clip his wings.

All our human persons derive from a common Source, which is the true profound Being and together the Having to Be, the Final Destination. Such is the Divine Person. His wealth is not derived such as in the case of human persons, but is original. Every form and expression of love finds its North Star in the love of God.