

Love and selecting a marital partner

Tony White
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What is love?

An onerous task indeed, trying to define love. It seems safe to say that sometimes when people meet there is a special 'click'. Some say there is a 'chemistry' between them. They feel that instant rapport between them, something you can't manufacture, it is either there or it's not. When two such people meet they will probably fall in love. Why does this happen and what is it?



Love story. We all want it

The metaphor of 'falling in love' in itself is quite true I think. People do not run into love, or climb into love, or drive their car into love, instead they fall into love. "Falling" is a passive process and in one sense is almost a submission to the inevitable. Many people who are seeking love, flounder at the stage of falling in love. They don't let themselves be passive enough and they are rushing to find it, which means of course they never do. They are too desperate for love and one can only really find love when it falls into their arms by accident.

Of course I cannot define love. What I can do is examine some psychological processes that get caught up in this thing that can develop between a male and a female - romantic love. This may lead some of you to think that I am a cynic. I am not such a thing in fact I am quite an optimistic person.

To me the best way to define love is with a work of art, but as I said in my blog on the psychology of food and weight loss, eating can easily get encased in a web of psychology. The same is for love. It is quite a simple thing for two people to fall into love but human psychology can (and does) complicate it. This article is on how human psychology can complicate love.



Love and scripts

In Transactional Analysis one would say there is chemistry when the two people's life scripts combine. One can get combinations like:

Victim & rescuer

Victim & persecutor

Critical Parent & Rebellious Child

Critical parent & Conforming Child

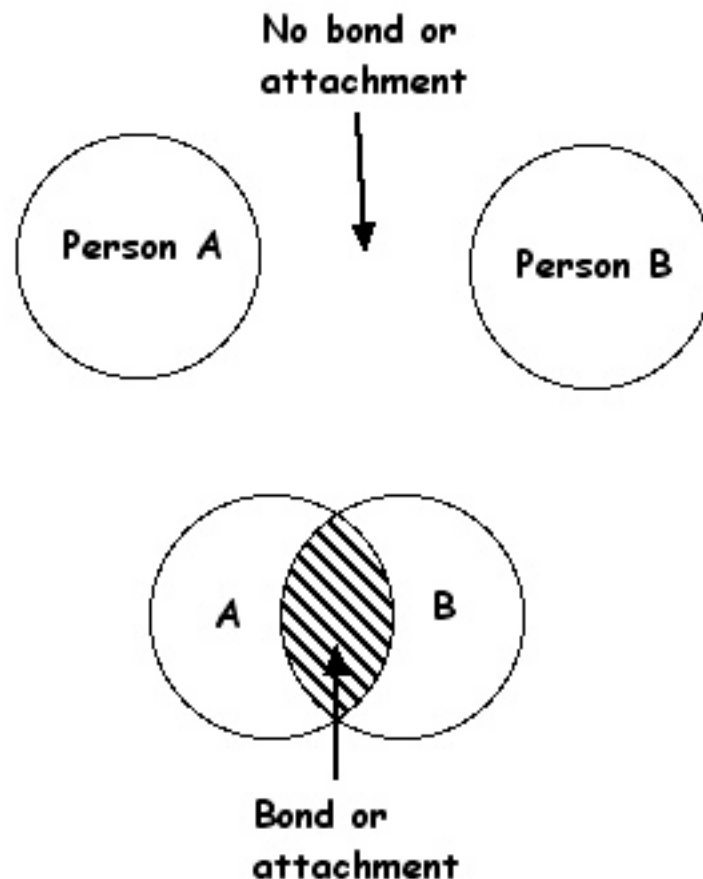
I+U- & I-U+

A person who comes from the victim position in life will combine easily with the person who comes from the persecutor position. These people will have a sense of knowing where the other person is coming from and a deeper understanding of them. The bully and the victim know how to get on together, they understand each other. Their life scripts fit or have a connection.

In domestic violence women often say how much they love the violent man. This surprises some people, but really it is not surprising at all. In such situations we have a persecutor and a victim who feel they understand each other because they do. Their scripts fit, they will have a sense of knowing where the other person is coming from. This can be the extra special connection which is felt.

Love and attachment

Basic to all human relationships is the idea of forming an attachment or bond. This means when we form an attachment to someone the boundaries between two people become less clear or defined. The two people's sense of self get combined and confused a bit. See diagram below. This is a normal human process. When an attachment exists then people feel they have a special bond because they do!



Attachments form early in relationships in what is known as the honeymoon period. This is when there is affection and feelings of romantic love. People highlight their similarities and tend to discount their differences. If there is something they dislike then they will think things like, "Oh we can change that later on". This honeymoon usually lasts for 6 to 18 months and by the end an attachment is well and truly formed. Then the romantic love stops and people start working at a more realistic relationship. The love exists because it helps the normal human process of bonding. Unfortunately this really good love - Romantic love - is only temporary thing I'm afraid.



In attachment our sense of self gets confused with someone else.

Love and meeting unmet needs

All parents mess up to some degree. All kids are left with psychological scars to some degree. One way of understanding that is to say that all of us have some unmet Free Child needs. Somewhere in our childhood our parents did not meet some need we had. To find out what it was, you can ask yourself a simple question:

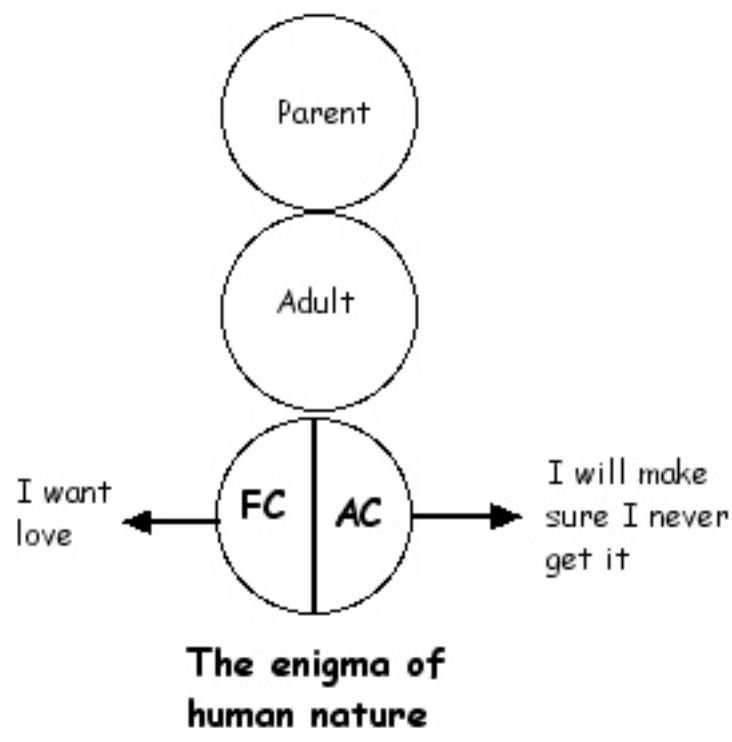
"What is the one thing that I always wanted from father/mother and never got?"

Usually the answer is something like understanding, encouragement, time, love, being there, support, listening to me and so on. This is a pivotal question in the understanding of why we select a particular marital partner. Sometimes we hear women say, I will never marry a man like my father or a man say, I will never marry a woman like my mother.

A more psychological way of saying this is "I will never marry a person who won't meet my unmet Free Child needs". When one goes through life they will from time to time come across someone who they feel has the personality to meet this unmet need they have carried with them for years. They do listen to you, or encourage you or express their affection directly to you. At last you have met a person who will meet that unmet need!!

When this happens it is possible these two people will fall in love, but humans are such an enigma. They have a tendency to do the same self-defeating behaviour over and over again. When in the romantic love stage he does give her love and

affection like father never did, but then further down the road he is working so hard all the affection giving comes to a halt. Or the woman is very supportive of her man but later on all she seems to do is criticise him. Over the years I have heard over and over people say, "In the beginning she seemed so different to mother, but she has ended up just like my mother". This contradiction of human nature is explained in the diagram below. We all have these two opposing forces operating in us.



We set out and fall in love with a person who is not like mother and end up setting ourselves up so that is precisely who we marry. We are a conundrum indeed. That's the love story for now. Some fall in love because of their scripts fit together, or when we form an attachment or when we are tricking ourselves that we are getting unmet needs met at last!

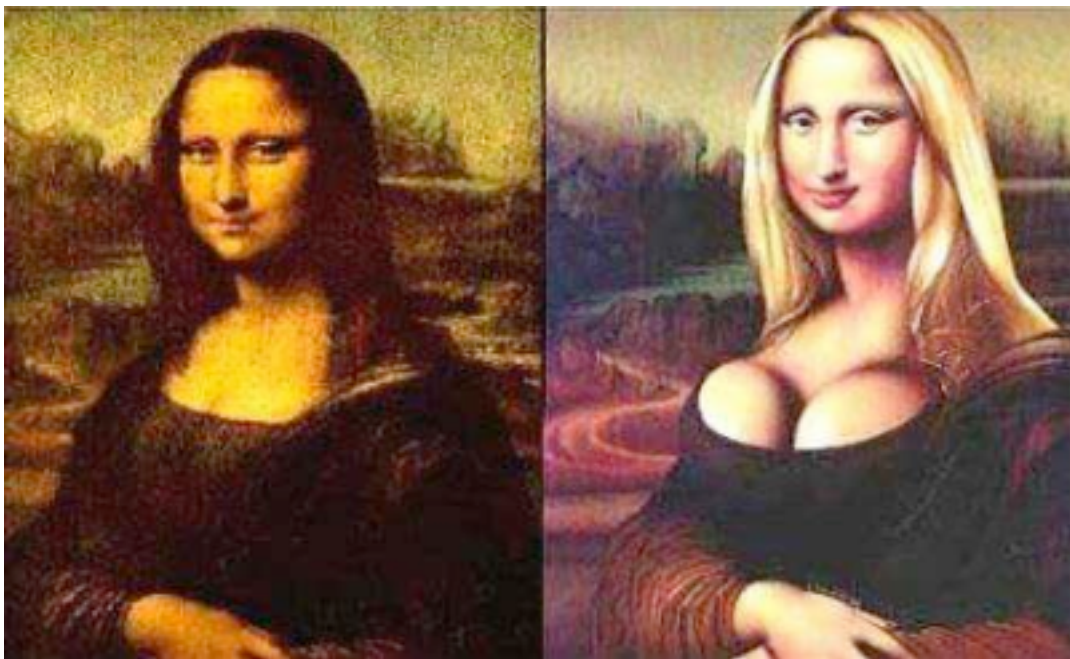
Romantic love - Go home with the ugly one

This is some what of an unfortunate turn of phrase, but I do think there is some truth to it. This saying relates to what was said above about our desire to get our original unmet needs met. In Transactional Analysis this is referred to as The Early Demand

I proposed that people will marry those who to some degree will not meet the

needs which the person has had all their life. Logically from this, if you met someone who would meet those needs then you wouldn't marry them. This is saying we are attracted to those who will further our life script. We are attracted to those who will play the necessary psychological games and allow us to keep our original unmet needs unmet.

Generally one won't be attracted to people who will work against your life script and pressure you to a more healthy position. We tend to not fall in love with such people. So the mantra is - Don't go home with the one you find attractive, go home with the one where there is no special attraction. However, who is going to do that?



Which one is attractive from a romantic point of view depends on your psyche

This could be the psychologist's explanation of romantic love. I must say it is a pessimistic view of love and I could not fully agree with it, but I do think there is some truth to it.

As we know however the life script is an awesome psychological force. To truly move outside of it is a difficult thing to do. What I am describing here is nothing unusual. All I am saying is that people tend to behave in patterns and this would be widely accepted I think. We have our good and healthy patterns as well as our self-defeating patterns and of course it is the self-defeating patterns that get the most attention.



Most people just seek the same thing over and over.

As an example I recently came across this comment on the blogosphere by some desperate blogger:

"Every guy I've dated has been one or more of the following: a drunk, drug addict, wife-beater, convict, sociopath, liar, cheater, thief, con artist, sad sack....did I leave anyone out?"

Why would a person do that? You would think that after the first experience then never again, but that is not the way we seem to operate us humans.

Sometimes people will spontaneously move more towards health and break the self defeating patterns a bit and then there are others who will spontaneously go further in the unhealthy direction.

One thing is for sure love can get people into some very uncomfortable relationships and keep them there. So have a look around at those people whom you know and have decided that they are 'not your type'. If the opportunity arose that you could date them, you know you would never fall in love with them. The chemistry or 'zing' is just not there. Are they mostly mean, nasty and rotten people, or are they fun loving, kind and friendly people? What kind of people are you keeping in your life at the moment. Will they further your life script or not?