



Christian Psychology Around The World

# THE EMCAPP JOURNAL

21 / 2024

## **Topic: Love in different dimensions.**

- Christian Love is Both Agape and Eros
- Finding the Balance Between Self-Sacrifice and Self-Care...
- Can love destroy a human person?
- and others

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# editorial

Experiencing oneself as being loved and simultaneously wishing to grow in love: these two impulses send every person on an individual, unique and lifelong path. If we mean it seriously with our progress along this path, they lead to a crying out of our hearts, a cry of liberation: “Lord, help me to love (more)!”

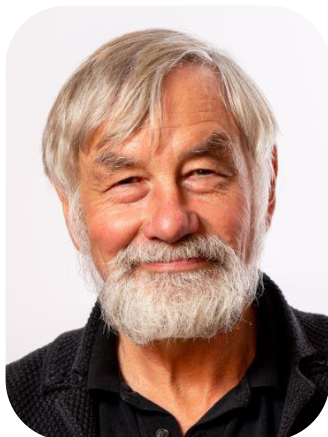
It is a rocky path: “Believing in love brings with it the risk of being deceived. But to believe in love and to be deceived is better than not to believe in love. In the latter case, one would truly be deceived.” (Sören Kierkegaard, 1813-1855, Works of Love, Vol. I, 8/9)

The great danger still remains: loving without expecting love in return.

This path will hardly be a topic in psychotherapy and counselling, but represents rather the other end of the love process: How can clients experience themselves as being loved, even in their own failures, in crises and stress situations, or with regard to their own biographies. To love without expecting love in return, in contrast, is more a task for every therapist or counsellor.

This edition of the eJournal ‘Christian Psychology Around The World’ seeks to examine love in different dimensions and to “get closer to it” from different perspectives, especially bearing in mind the extremely varied backgrounds of the authors – theologically, denominationally, culturally and professionally.

Love is a lifelong learning process.



Yours, Werner May

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## **Why do we have a bilingual journal?**

In our movement for Christian Psychology, we meet as Christians with very different backgrounds: different churches, different cultures, different professional trainings...

There is a common desire for the movement, but highly “multi-lingual” ideas of its realization! Therefore, a bilingual journal is just a small reference to our multilingual voices to remind us:

Languages are an expression of cultures, countries and of their people. By writing in two languages, we want to show our respect to the authors of the articles, to their origin and heritage, and at the same time symbolically show respect to all the readers in other foreign countries.

There are many foreign languages that we do not understand. Within our own language, we intend to understand one another, but we fail to do so quite often. To really understand one another is a great challenge, and we also want to point to this challenge by offering a bilingual journal.

“When languages die, knowledge about life gets lost.” (Suzanne Romaine, 2011)

Finally, there is a pragmatic reason: As we want to have authors from one special country to write the main articles of every journal, it will be easier for them to distribute the journal in their own country, when it also is in their own language.

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# the first 20 numbers

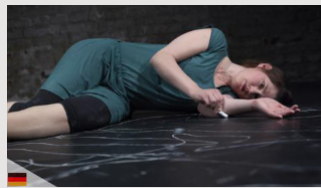
## of the eJournal Christian Psychology Around The World

The EMCAPP Journal "The Christian Psychology Around the World" is published in Germany, the main editor is Werner May. Since 2011 the internet bilingual Journal is published two times a year. The authors of articles and comments are psychologists, psychotherapists and scientists from different countries of the world.

This journal is published by the European Movement for Christian Anthropology, Psychology and Psychotherapy in cooperation with the IGNIS-Akademie für Christliche Psychologie.



JOURNAL NO. 1 - 2012  
Poland



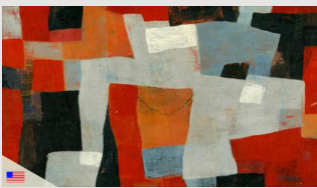
JOURNAL NO. 2 - 2012  
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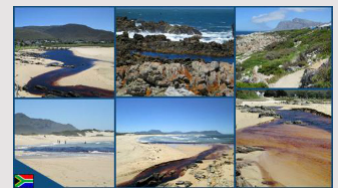
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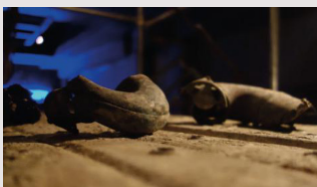
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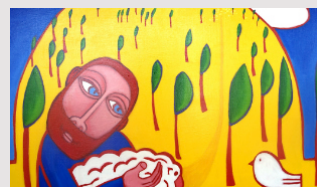
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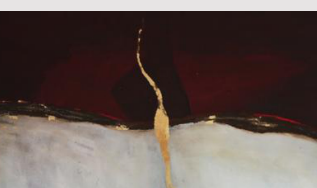
JOURNAL NO. 14 - 2020  
„Coping with Stress in Theory and Practice of Christian Psychology“



JOURNAL NO. 15 - 2020  
„Basic trust and secure attachment - Christian anthropological, educational and psychotherapeutic aspects.“



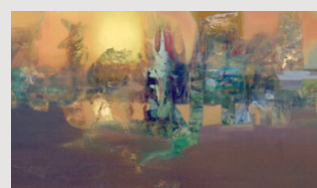
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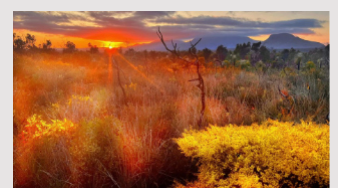
JOURNAL NO. 17 - 2022  
„Situating Grief in Redemptive History for the Sake of Joy“



JOURNAL NO. 18 - 2022  
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„Spiritual Formation“



JOURNAL NO. 20 - 2023  
„Christian faith in everyday life“

about the artist



**Jens Wolf** (Germany)

Water colour by Rusudan Gotsiridze (Tbilisi)

## Artist Statement

### Fundamental decisions

#### I have always painted

Even as a small child, I found pencils, paints and white paper fascinating. But it was at the age of 12, when I stood in front of a portrait by Emil Nolde, that painting made its way into my consciousness – and probably into my subconscious as well. During a life crisis, Nolde's strongly expressive painting reached my wounded soul. And out of those depths there then arose the first pictures, which had nothing to do with children's painting – watercolours, charcoal and crayon drawings, and soon also oil paintings.

52 years ago, I made the three fundamental decisions for my life – I decided on a living faith in God, I married my wife Christiane, and we became members of a Christian community in Gnadenthal in Taunus. Young, idealistic, devout – that was how we were, and suddenly it seemed that the “old pictures” no longer fitted in with the new life. It was only in the course of the years – and with the inevitable crises – that I found a way of connecting with old roots. Out of the depths of the unconscious, painting once again rose up as my personal way of expressing the reality of life and faith. A long time elapsed before I found the path from the word to the picture. It is not in a diary, but in a sketchbook, that I respond to biblical texts and messages. I formulate prayers not only with words, but often with forms and colours.

### The risks of encounter

“You have to paint ten pictures and throw nine away.” That was the advice given to me by the painter Emil Wachter from Baden when we met on the island of Patmos. It was only as time passed that I came to understand him. There lies the piece of white paper, encouraging and challenging. I take up the challenge, begin without a sketch, draw with thick graphite, paint with a broad brush. Every time this happens, it is like a leap on a tightrope, like a dialogue between the materials and myself. I'm not in control of colour or paper, not every picture is successful, corrections are almost impossible on handmade paper. In these processes I understand what is meant when we say that one does not always have to do everything right in life, but that one has to make a new start again.

### The freedom of longing

The moment when the Jewish artist Jehuda Bacon commented on one of my paintings with these words, “One can see that you have expended much effort”, brought the release of new creativity. Challenges, successes, crises

and failures – these all form part of anyone’s life. The solutions come not from resolving the tensions, but from integrating them. Creating room for longing and entering into intermediate spaces – the spaces between heaven and earth, between the spiritual and the animal, between the “I” and the “you”. Looking back, I understand my life as a path which has not yet reached its destination. My painting is like a search, driven on by a longing – from the “No Longer to the Not Yet”.

Jens Wolf was born in 1949 at the foot of the Swabian Jura.

In 1962, an encounter with a portrait by Emil Nolde made such an impression on him that his painting activities date back to this moment – with charcoal, crayons, water colours and Indian ink.

Three fundamental decisions made in 1972 shaped the rest of his life: a faith relationship with God, the marriage with his wife Christiane, and life in a Christian community. These years saw the creation of caricatures and water colours on the themes of man and landscape.

During 1991, he painted in watercolours on the island of Patmos with Emil Wachter. White paper became a source of light and a constant challenge.

Several encounters and conversations with Jehuda Bacon in Jerusalem confirmed him in his artistic path. Since 2006, a personal language of colour and form has emerged. He has been developing a free use of such different techniques as watercolours, Indian ink, graphite and acrylic. He describes the painting process as a conversation between inspiration, substrate, paint, implement and artist. His themes moving the force field between heaven and earth, humour and earnest, reality and the surreal, animal, man and God.

Jens Wolf is a member of the Jesus Community in Volkenroda Monastery in Thüringen. Since 2017, he has been living and working in Ahnatal-Weimar by Kassel.

Rights for the images:  
Jens Wolf  
[www.atelier-jens-wolf.de](http://www.atelier-jens-wolf.de)



**Shining City**



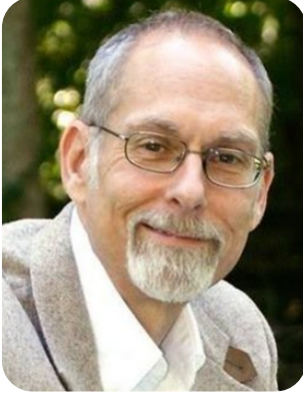
**Amazed City**







**Articles to Main Topic**  
**„Love in different dimensions“**



Eric L. Johnson

Eric L. Johnson, Ph.D., is the Founder and Board Chair of the Christian Psychology Institute in Louisville, Kentucky. Recently retired from his academic post at Houston Christian University, Dr. Johnson has published numerous books on Christian Psychology. He is widely recognized as an authority in Christ-Centered Therapy.

**Former contributions in our eJournal by Eric you can see here:**

<http://emcapp.ignis.de/1/#/96>

<http://emcapp.ignis.de/6/#/8>

<http://emcapp.ignis.de/2/#/4>

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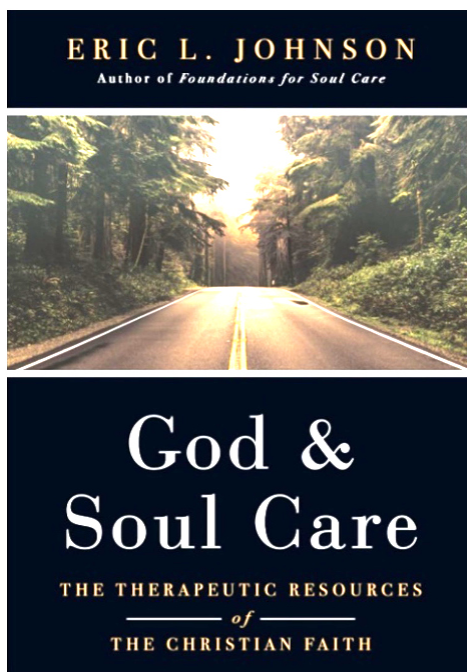
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<https://emcapp.ignis.de/15/#p=60>

This article is adapted from Chapter 2 of *God & Soul Care* (Johnson, 2017).

The Start of our topic “Love in different dimensions”:

## Experiencing the Love of the Trinity and Other Humans is Therapeutic



**Contents:**

Preface

Acknowledgments

Analytical Outline

PART I: The Doxological/ Therapeutic Agenda of the Trinity

PART II: The Goodness of God and the Human Creation

PART III: The Divine Diagnosis

PART IV: The Divine Intervention

PART V: The Divine Therapy

PART VI: The Divine Cure

**Here you can read more:**

<https://www.buecher-koenig-nk.de/shop/item/9780830891610/god-and-soul-care-von-eric-l-johnson-e-book-epub#>

When a person becomes a Christian, they are brought into union with Christ. As a result, the Father of Christ becomes their Father, and they are given the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, God comes to dwell in believers (Jn 14:23; 15:4; Jn 17:21, 23, 26). However, our experience of God is imperfect, because even the capacities of believers to dwell in God by faith and love are so compromised by remaining sin. Nevertheless, there is something thoroughly remarkable in the communion we can enjoy (1Jn 1:3). To begin with, divine communion is vastly superior to simply living and moving and having our being in God—which is true of all humans (Acts 17:28). The triune God is especially present within believers and knows them lovingly, as his children, which he communicates through the Spirit’s pouring out the love of God in their hearts (Ro 5:5) and enabling them to receive God’s presence and knowledge and give that love back to God, in a way massively poorer, but vaguely resembling the reciprocal love, affirmation, and joy of the Trinity. Through faith and love—what John calls “abiding” (15:4)—believers and the Trinity participate in a communion of consciousnesses—a harmonizing of their subjectivities (a kind of “intersubjectivity”)—which Eleonore Stump (2010) considers an aspect of love: sharing joint attention; personal presence; and thoughts, emotions, and story; a communion hampered only by the internal conflict that remains in the believer.

One would think this could lead to significant psychospiritual benefits for believers: In this way, they can taste the richest interpersonal experience possible with an immaterial and infinite, tri-personal being: a mature, secure attachment bond, friendship (Jn 15:13-15), intimacy with God, and a sense of being wanted, cherished, and loved by a holy God of love, pervasively conditioned by a spirit of dependence, worship, and obedience. Yet such blessings are not communicated automatically. Apart from the comparatively rare miraculous disposal, to realize them in their lives, believers must “abide in Christ” (Jn 15:4), which involves intentional, conscious appropriation, and it is therefore li-

imited by the believer’s capacity to do so.

Such intersubjective experiences with God occur through the believer’s faith and love, in prayer, Bible meditation, and worship, as believers sharing attention with the omnipresent, indwelling God in love. By this means they make possible a significant kind of healing through the reorganization of their brain/souls around God and his glory, creating reparative relational experiences with God by the Spirit that promote internal integration and reduce their double-mindedness and the conflicts of a divided heart.

### **Hindrances to Soul Healing**

Our greatest impediment to such healing is the internal resistance to God that all humans have called sin, the resolution of which God has accomplished in Christ. Further hindering the ability to abide in Christ for many is the fact that humans form cognitive-affective/neural structures through the course of their early socialization—called an “internal working model” (Bowlby, 1988)—that come to constitute their deep view of themselves and others and condition the quality of their relationships with God and others (Coe & Hall, 2010; Guntrip, 1957; Moriarity & Hoffman, 2007; Spero, 1992). Through earlier intersubjective experiences with chronically poor caregivers, one’s internal working model can be rather severely distorted, and unless there is healing, its effects will continue throughout life to condition negatively one’s perceptions of others and interactions with them, including one’s deep perceptions of God (called one’s God-image; Moriarity & Hoffman, 2007), and therefore the quality of one’s interactions with him.

While a fundamental recentering of one’s life occurs at conversion, most of the damaging effects of previous development are not immediately remediated. The cognitive-affective/neural dynamic structures that were formed earlier in life remain, and it takes a certain amount of maturation just to recognize these effects, let alone learn how to undermine them and develop new, healthier structures. Signifi-

cant change in memory structures, grounded in the brain, that underlie one's self-representation and perceptions of others (including beliefs, emotions, mental images, and actions, woven into one's narrative through experience and discourse) takes months and years of daily doses of loving communion with God. Through new, repeated, positive intersubjective experiences with the triune God—the deeper and more emotionally intense the better—new, healthier beliefs, feelings, mental images, actions, and narrative episodes can be stored in one's memory/brain that can gradually modify the counselee's damaged internal working model (such relational healing among humans has been called “earned secure attachment,” Hesse, 2008). A merely intellectual relationship with God, based solely on conscious “head-knowledge” (one's God-concept; Moriarity & Hoffman, 2007) is not enough to heal the unconscious regions of the soul (Coe & Hall, 2010).

Consider, for example, the experience of adults who have been raised by chronically critical, rejecting parents, who often have within themselves a condemning psychological dynamic structure, sometimes called the “inner critic.” Usually connected to and triggered by one's conscience, this structure can be a source of frequent internal criticism that maintains excessive shame that is experienced as self-evidently valid and “ego-syntonic.” A loving, intersubjective relationship with the triune God, guided by well-interpreted Scripture, can give believers an alternative, transcendent perspective by which to view themselves, enabling them to identify, objectify, and then undermine such a “voice.” As they make progress in doing so, they can, in turn, draw even closer into communion with the triune God, a reciprocal pattern that can continue deepening indefinitely.

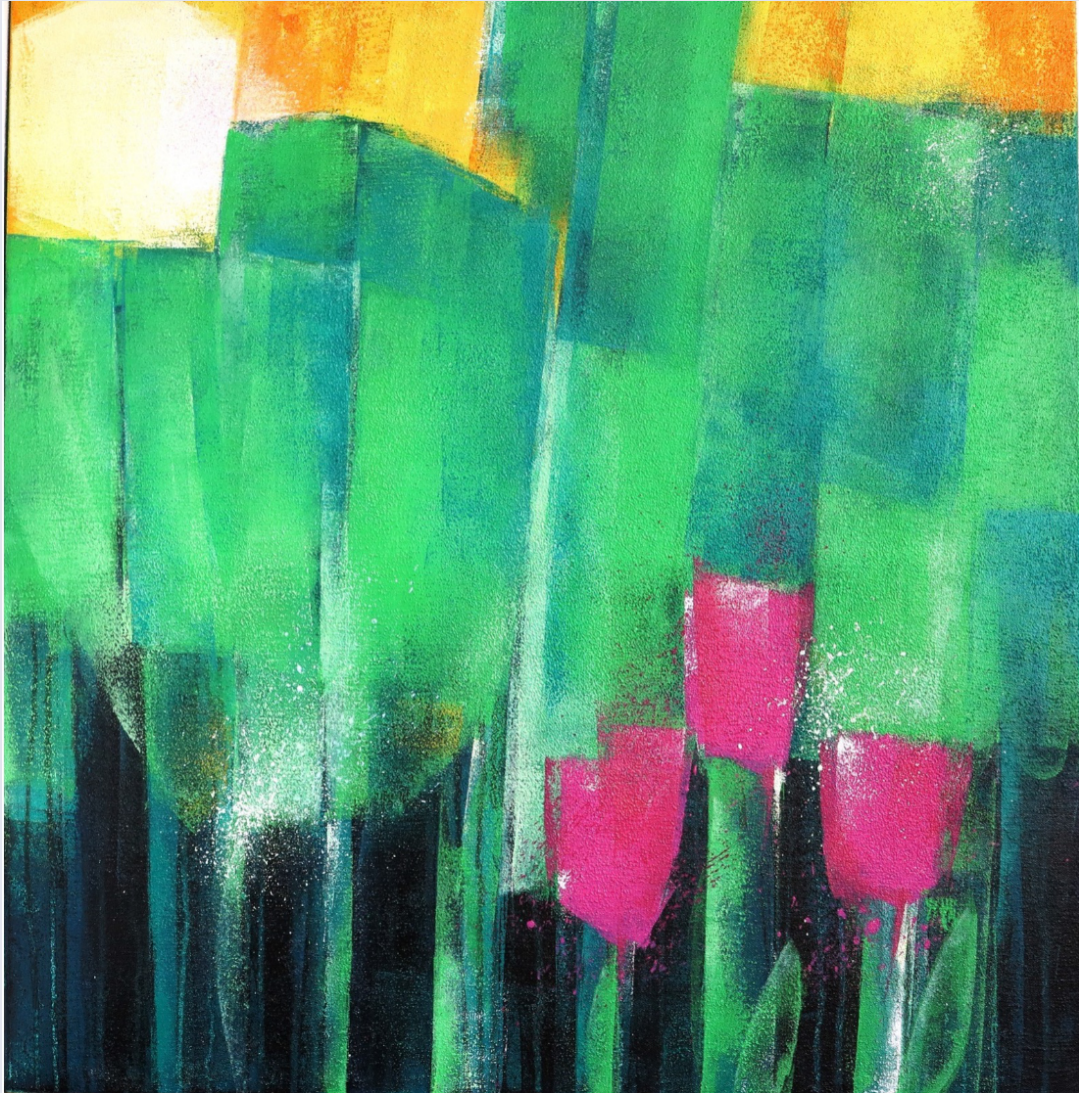
### **Relationships with Others Can Also Heal the Soul**

Perhaps the Christian's biggest hindrance to flourishing in this life is the fact that we cannot now have a concrete, tangible relationship with

the invisible God. God is immaterial (except for Jesus Christ, and he is now in heaven), and the presence of the indwelling Spirit is often obscure—we are often not aware of him and neglect to focus our attention on him, and sometimes he just feels absent, regardless of what we do (e.g., Ps 22:1). Remarkably, God himself told Adam it was not good for him to be alone, while God was with him (Gen 2:18)! Human relationships, therefore, are essential to human flourishing, as well as soul-healing, and they are intended by God to be complementary to and reflective of our relationship with him. Humans were designed to be concrete images of God to one another. In sinful and damaged hearts, while adult relationships can turn into idolatry (Welch, 1998), humans can also be instruments in the Redeemer's hands (Tripp, 2002), and therefore a means of grace to one another (analogous to the other means of grace God has given us, like prayer, Bible reading and meditation, and so on). Caring human relationships model communion with God, so that in Christ by faith they can become a more tangible, creaturely medium for God-centered soul healing, as loving counselors and friends serve as signs of the triune God.

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**The Garden Eden**



Andrey Lorgus  
(Bulgaria/Russia)

Andrey Lorgus - psychologist, anthropologist, Orthodox priest, the EM-CAPP Board member, the rector of the Institute of Christian Psychology (Moscow), the first Dean of Psychology Faculty at St. John the Divine Russian Orthodox University (2002 – 2008); counseling psychologist, lecturer of psychology and anthropology. Heading the ICP On-line Department of „distance education“. Research interests: Personality psychology and Family psychology.

Born in 1956. Graduate of Lomonosov Moscow state University (1982), Faculty of psychology. Now living in Bulgaria.

Андрей Лоргус – психолог, антрополог, православный священник, член правления EMCAPP, ректор Института Христианской психологии, первый декан факультета психологии РПУ св. Иоанна Богослова (2002 – 2008); консультант, преподаватель психологии и антропологии. Ведущий on-line отделения Института «Дистанционное образование».

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<http://emcapp.ignis.de/3/#/142>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/10/#p=116>

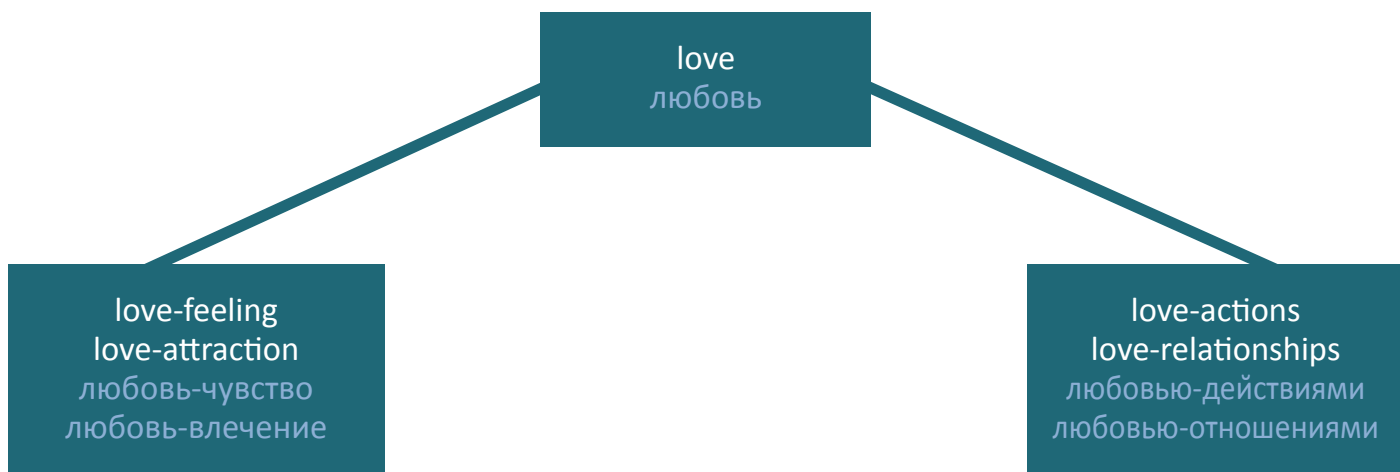
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## **Active love as psychotherapeutic telos**

The Gospel commandment of love - "love your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27) is calling for two ultimate goals. First is love for one's neighbor. Second is self-love. That's what can be called telos - the highest destiny. And if psychotherapy practice can be linked with Christianity, this will be its telos. Love as the ultimate purpose of the soul therapy. We consider both directions of love as guidelines for the therapy - love for Another ("neighbor") and love for oneself ("as yourself"). Both of these activities can become strategies for psychotherapy. Eit-

## **Деятельная любовь - психотерапевтический телос**

Лоргус Андрей, Москва - Варна.  
Евангельская заповедь о любви "возлюби ближнего твоего, как самого себя" (Луки 10:27) призывает к двум предельным целям любви. Первое, любовь к ближнему. Второе, любовь к себе. Это и можно назвать телосом - высшим предназначением. И если психотерапевтическая деятельность может сопрягаться с христианством, то это и будет её телос. Любовь, как высшее предназначение терапии души. В качестве ориентиров терапевтической деятельности



her can be considered as specific types of practice.

In close relationship love can show itself as activity, where works of love may turn into new skills and establish new kind of relations. In psychotherapy this happens through the experience of finding new solutions and strategies.

Is "working" with love possible in psychotherapy? Yes, it is. But such work will be limited to love-relationships and love-actions. It seems significant also to distinguish love-feeling or love-attraction.

It is important to note that the capacities of psychotherapy of love as emotion or passion are limited. The limitations are determined by what is under personal control in the inner experience and what is not. For instance, can a person manage his spontaneous thoughts, spontaneous feelings, emotional reactions, or unconscious phenomena? The question is rhetorical. The psychologist most likely will give a negative answer.

Is it possible to work with spontaneous thoughts and feelings in therapy, if they are beyond personal control? Probably not, though it can be argued. But that's not our task.

A person can experience these phenomena (feeling and attraction) as if coming to him "from the outside", i.e. not by his own decision, compulsory. Probably, these are spontaneous feelings and experiences. In our essay the psy-

мы рассматриваем оба направления любви. Любовь к Другому (ближнему), и любовь к себе (как самому себе). Обе эти деятельности могут стать стратегиями психотерапии. И обе можно рассматривать, как особые виды практики.

В близких отношениях любовь может оказаться деятельностью, в которой дела любви могут стать новыми навыками и закрепиться как новые отношения. В терапии это происходит через опыт поиска новых решений и новых стратегий.

Можно ли «работать» с любовью в психотерапии? Можно. Но такая работа будет ограничена любовью-отношениями и любовью-действиями. Представляется важным различать любовь-чувство, или любовь-влечение.

При этом важно отметить, возможности психотерапии любви как эмоции или как страсти, ограничены. Границы возможностей определяются тем, что во внутреннем опыте подвластно человеку, а что нет. Например, подвластны ли человеку мысли, спонтанные мысли, или спонтанные чувства, или эмоциональные реакции, или бессознательные явления? Вопрос риторический. Психолог ответит скорее всего отрицательно.

Если мысли и чувства, приходящие спонтанно неподвластны человеку, то возможно ли с ними работать в терапии? Скорее всего нет, хотя с этим можно поспорить. Но у нас иная задача.

Эти явления (чувство и влечение) человек может переживать, как пришедшие к нему



chootherapy of love will not be highlighted from this perspective.

We are interested in active love, which reveals itself as free will, as an action and behavior. In this sense, a person can experience his love as activity, as what he can change and control. Spontaneous feelings are very difficult to manage, while personal actions and even intentions are controllable. An action includes the stages of planning, motivation, goals and tasks.

Erich Fromm wrote best about active love in his book "The Art of loving". (The Art of Loving. An Enquiry into the Nature of Love by Erich Fromm. Harper & Brothers Publisher. 1956.).

Erich Fromm identified several types of love activities: knowledge, attention, care, respect, responsibility. Thus, we can speak about specific actions and deeds with goals and tools, means and conditions. These are not just emotions or reactions, passions or drives. These are works of love!

All of them are the psychological activities, which can be considered as objects of intervention in psychotherapy. A person can identify, analyze and transform his actions, possibly making it a joint work with the therapist.

Working with feelings is not always as constructive as it can be with actions. Actions and deeds can be controlled and designed. In therapy, we can: discuss which strategies are meeting the expectations of the partners in relations, what actions they are ready to perform, showig their love, what kind of actions they expect from their partners and what reactions are expected to certain actions of the partners.

Next, in the sessions we correlate the history of relationships with certain actions or vice versa in the absence of expected actions.

Valeriy, a 40-year-old man, in the first marriage, father of two children. His family was in a pre-divorce situation, and during a year the spouses have been threatening each other with divorce.

«извне», т.е. не по его собственному решению, как-бы вынужденно. Скорее всего это спонтанные чувства и переживания. В этом эссе мы не будем рассматривать психотерапию любви в этом смысле.

Нас интересует любовь деятельная, которая раскрывается как свобода воли, как поступок и как поведение. В этом смысле человек может переживать свою любовь как деятельность, как то, что он может изменять и контролировать. Спонтанные чувства контролировать очень трудно, а вот свои поступки, даже свои намерения, поддаются контролю. У поступка есть этапы планирования, мотива, цели и задачи.

О любви деятельной лучше всего написал Эрих Фромм в книге Искусство Любить. (The Art of Loving. An Enquiry into the Nature of Love by Erich Fromm.

Harper & Brothers Publisher. 1956.).

Эрих Фромм выделил несколько видов деятельностей любви: знание, внимание, забота, уважение, ответственность. Таким образом мы можем говорить о конкретных действиях и поступках, имеющих цель и инструменты, средства и условия. Это не просто эмоции или реакции, страсти или влечения.

Это дела!

Все это психологические действия, которые могут рассматриваться в психотерапии как объекты действия. Человек может выявлять, анализировать, трансформировать свои действия, и это может быть совместной работой в психотерапии.

Работа с чувствами не всегда бывает столь конструктивной, сколь может работа с действиями. Действия и поступки поддаются контролю и проектированию. В терапии мы можем: обсуждать какие стратегии соответствуют ожиданиям партнеров в отношениях, какие действия они готовы совершать, проявляя свою любовь и какие действия ожидают от своих партнеров, какие реакции ожидают на свои действия, и как реагируют сами на те или иные действия партнеров. Далее мы сравниваем на сессиях историю отношений с теми или иными действиями или наоборот



**O-Antiphone: Wisdom**

Each quarrel follows one scenario: an insignificant reason, leading to mutual emotional reaction, insults and threats, tears and depression, quarrels and separation. Valeriy went to counseling because he was afraid of divorce and would like to save his marriage. The problem was that he wanted to do something about it, but didn't really know what. What tormented him most was this "inaction". In psychotherapy, we have considered various behavioral strategies with different motivation. Valeriy sought to realize the motive of restoring relations, but used aggressive and destructive techniques: intimidation, empty reasoning, logical violence, supremacy over his wife. It turned out that the used methods did not work, and could be abandoned. Moreover, Valeriy admitted his dislike for these techniques, realized that they were not in his nature. He is more prone to "works of love". However, he is not successful in these works, recalling them only after a quarrel and regretting that he did not perform them. The following strategy has been outlined in the therapy: we have compiled a list of possible cases or actions that could express Valeriy's love for his wife, outlined the situations where certain actions could be appropriate and feasible, made a map of possible actions, Valeriy even painted his probable unwanted emotional reactions. In general, an active strategy was outlined, that could be desirable and emotionally attractive. Such a strategy promised the realization of his true feelings, rather than spontaneous, mostly negative reactions. Valeriy noted two important changes: he discovered a lot of energy inside him and saw the prospect of a new relationship. The main problem was solved, the situation was no longer perceived as hopeless. There were several solutions, and all of them were somehow confined to his own activities. Valeriy saw the perspective of possible actions and deeds, which could not but rejoice him.

The new strategy coincided with his main hope, Valeriy loved his wife, and was glad to realize his feelings not only as emotions, but most importantly, as actions. And it was not reluctant strategy to keep his wife and save the marriage, but self-realization of the need for love.

в отсутствии ожидаемых действий.

Мужчина, 40 лет, Валерий женат первым браком, имеет двоих детей. Семья оказалась в пред разводной ситуации, и в течении года супруги угрожают друг другом разводом. Каждая ссора проходит по одному сценарию: малозначимый повод, взаимная эмоциональная реакция, оскорбления и угрозы, слезы и депрессия, размолвки и разъезды. Валерий обратился к психологу, потому что боится развода и хотел бы сохранить брак. Проблема заключалась в том, что он хотел что-то делать для этого, но не знал что. Больше всего его мучило это «бездействие». В психотерапии мы рассматривали различные стратегии поведения с различными мотивами. Валерий стремился реализовать мотив восстановления отношений, но использовал для этого агрессивные и деструктивные техники: запугивания, резонерства, логического насилия, верховенства над супругой. Выяснилось, что эти техники плохо работают, и что от них можно отказаться. Более того, Валерий признался, что ему неприятны эти техники, и они не его. Ему больше свойственны «дела любви». Однако, дела любви ему не удаются, и он вспоминает их только после ссоры и сожалеет, что не исполнял их.

Наметилась такая стратегия: мы составили реестр возможных дел или действий, которые могли бы выразить любовь Валерия к супруге, наметили ситуации в которых те или иные действия уместны и возможны, составили карту возможных поступков, Валерий даже нарисовал свои возможные нежеланные эмоциональные реакции. В целом, наметилась деятельная стратегия, которая могла быть желанной и эмоционально привлекательной. Такая стратегия обещала реализацию его подлинных чувств, а не спонтанных реакций, в основном негативных. Валерий отметил в себе две важнейшие перемены: он обнаружил в себе много энергии и увидел перспективу новых отношений. Основная проблема была решена, ситуация не

In the above therapy case, it was too early to speak about the "victory of love". The planned actions should have become habitual and reactive. But the man's joy due to the fact that he has certain opportunities, active opportunities to realize his feelings and intentions, the joy experienced by both - the client and the therapist, has become the key to success.

Evgenia, has a husband and two children. She came for therapy, being in depression after the birth of her second child. Later it turned out that the relationship with her husband was the factor of the depressed state development. Though the relationships in marriage were mutual and stable, the woman was dissatisfied and constantly reproached her husband, was unhappy with him, and often cried over her fate. She was also extremely displeased with herself, feeling guilty for the relationship was going so badly.

It turned out that the list of Evgenia's discontents mainly included the items, that her husband "does not do for her": does not respect, does not listen, does not ask, does not support, is not interested in her feelings and her affairs. At the first stage of the therapy we managed to formulate a list of deeds and actions that her husband did not do, but which Evgenia expected. She repeatedly tried to find out, speaking with her husband, why he wasn't doing all she expected, but he couldn't or wouldn't explain. At the second stage, Evgenia was able to put into words her feelings about what she had found out at the first stage. These feelings formed a "virtual letter of accusation" to her husband, which of course remained only within the therapy framework. At the third stage, Evgenia tried to outline her own strategy of behavior in the current circumstances: despite the lack of expected actions of her husband, Evgenia found it possible not only to treat her husband with love and respect, but to express actively her love. At the fourth stage, Evgenia was able to select only those of her actions and deeds that corresponded to her feelings and level of attachment. In her arsenal of actions there remained almost no deeds and actions performed out of a sense of duty or according to the establishments or traditions of marriage. By the

воспринималась более как безвыходная. Решений было несколько, и все они так или иначе замыкались на собственную деятельность. Валерий увидел перспективу возможный действий и поступков, что не могло его не радовать.

Новая стратегия совпадала с его основным упованием, Валерий любит свою жену, и был рад реализовать свои чувства не только как эмоции, но главное, как поступки. И это была не вынужденная стратегия, чтобы удержать жену и сохранить брак, а самореализация потребности любви.

В приведенном случае психотерапии ещё рано было говорить о "победе любви". Намеченные действия должны были стать привычными и реактивными. Но радость мужчины от того, что у него появились конкретные возможности, деятельные возможности реализации своих чувств и намерений, переживаемая нами, клиентом и терапевтом, стала залогом успеха

Евгения, имеющая мужа и двоих детей, обратилась в депрессивном состоянии после рождения второго ребенка. Позже оказалось, что факторами развития угнетенного состояния являются отношения с мужем. При взаимных и стабильных отношениях женщина была неудовлетворена своими отношениями и постоянно упрекала мужа, постоянно была недовольна им, и часто плакала над своей участью. Она была крайне недовольна собой, считая себя виноватой в том, что отношения складывались так неудачно.

Оказалось, что список недовольств Евгении включает в основном то, что муж «не делает для неё»: не уважает, не слушает, не спрашивает, не поддерживает, не интересуется её чувствами и её делами. На первом этапе нам удалось сформулировать список дел и поступков, которые муж не делал, но которые Евгения от него ожидала. Она неоднократно выясняла с мужем почему он не делает всего, что она от него ждала, но он не мог или не желал объяснять. На втором этапе Евгения сумела сформулировать свои чувства по поводу того, что удалось выяснить на первом этапе.

the end of therapy, Evgenia managed to accept her situation, when her husband's love was not manifested in a way she would like. His love that she knew and believed, but which looked unconfirmed for her. The situation turned out to be not symmetrical: they love each other, but still both are having mutual expectations of actions, which are never performed. Clarifying this situation was enough to relieve the tension. Evgenia completed her therapy (at least at this stage) having overcome the depressive state.

Paradoxically, "love therapy" can be successful despite the fact that the deficiency of active love remains. It turned out that the conscious expectation of active love can have a therapeutic effect. We can assume that there is a place for active love in loving relationships. And this place may turn out to be a place of power, where action and manifestation of love should be.

The second most important, after relationships, contribution to love therapy can be "self-love". This concept implies not egoism or selfishness, but active love for oneself as the subject of love. This can be understood in the same way as love for one's neighbor: knowledge, attention, care, respect and responsibility.

**Knowledge.** Self-cognition is probably the most best known spiritual and religious task. It includes the awareness of one's sins and passions. It is difficult to imagine the process of metanoia, or repentance without such knowledge. All the totality of personal psychological and spiritual structure can become the subject of self-cognition. Self-love makes possible to love not only the positive or the pleasing aspects in ourselves. Love gives the strength to see both one's own mistakes and crimes, as well as passions and perversions, and still to keep loving. It is love that gives us the strength to stand firm in the face of our conscious choice.

**Attention.** Self-attention, based on love is not a burden, it is not creating resistance. The one falls into resistance, who is feeling dislike, disgust, shame of himself.

**Care.** Mother teaches us to take care of ourselves. A caring mother is a loving mother. This is how, since childhood, a person builds a self-care function, based on love. Caring is love ex-

Эти чувства сложились в «виртуальное письмо – обвинение» к мужу, которое конечно осталось лишь в рамках терапии. На третьем этапе Евгения попыталась наметить собственную стратегию поведения в сложившихся условиях: несмотря на отсутствие ожидаемых поступков мужа, Евгения сочла для себя возможным не просто относиться к мужу с любовью и уважением, но выражать свою любовь деятельно. На четвертом этапе Евгения смогла отобрать только те свои поступки и дела, которые соответствовали её чувству и силе привязанности. В её арсенале дел почти не осталось дел и поступков из чувства долга, согласно установкам или традициям брака. На момент окончания терапии Евгения сумела принять свою ситуацию, в которой любовь её мужа выглядела не проявленной, как бы ей хотелось. Любовь, о которой она знала и верила, но которую не могла считать подтвержденной. Ситуация оказалась не симметричной: они любят друг друга, но по-прежнему ожидают друг от друга поступков, которых нет. Прояснение этой ситуации оказалось достаточно, чтобы снять напряжение. Евгения завершала терапию (по крайней мере, на этом этапе) преодолев депрессивные состояния.

Парадоксально, но «терапия любви» может оказаться успешной при том, что дефицит деятельной любви остался. Оказалось, что осознанное ожидание деятельной любви может иметь терапевтический эффект. Можно высказать предположение, что в любовных отношениях есть место для деятельной любви. И это место может оказаться местом силы. Там где должно быть действие и проявление любви.

Вторым, после отношений, важнейшим вкладом в терапию любви может быть "любовь к себе". В этом понятии скрывается не себялюбие или эгоизм, но деятельная любовь к себе, как субъекту любви. Это можно понимать также как и любовь к ближнему: познание, внимание, заботу, уважение и ответственность.

**Познание.** Познание себя наверное самая известная духовная и религиозная задача.

pressed in actions of life.

Respect. Love honors in itself the highest dignity, that could be provided by the entire history of human culture. But the most powerful inoculation of love for human being, including self-love, was given by the feat of the Son of God.

Responsibility. How can self-responsibility be understood? As a willingness to accept all the consequences of personal decisions. Self-love draws your decisions to your heart. Love increases the rate of responsibility, but not the degree of anxiety. On the contrary, love reduces anxiety and increases the willingness to be responsible for all personal deeds. This is probably due to the fact that self-attention allows us to see and know ourselves more clearly. The dark unconscious aspects become either knowable or perceived in so far as a person changes the view of himself.

Self-relation or self-attitude has been the subject of many studies and research, both in European and Russian literature (Sarjaveladze, Panteleev, Stolin). A person can treat himself in different ways. Unfortunately, in psychotherapy we commonly have to deal with negative or unidentified self-attitude.

In therapy, it is often necessary to work with the "self-loathing" neurosis. The client may feel dislike for himself, or for his reactions, his habits, his addictions. It's well known for psychologists how people dislike themselves. The lack of self-love can be manifested in causing various self-damage, in a careless attitude to own needs, in self-violence. With such clients it is difficult to develop strategies for realizing their needs and meeting them.

In these cases, we can talk about self-love therapy as a strategy that can combine self-knowledge and self-attention. This can be called healing by love. Self-love. And this is not selfishness. On the contrary, it is altruism, since by taking self-care a person removes the responsibility from others, making them free from the need of caring him.

Она включает в себя познание своих грехов и страстей. Без такого знания трудно представить процесс метанойи, или покаяния. Предметом познания себя может стать вся полнота психологического и духовного устройства человека. Любовь к себе позволяет любить в себе не только позитивное или радующее. Любовь дает силу видеть в себе и продолжать любить себя как свои ошибки и преступления, так и свои страсти и извращения. Именно любовь дает силу устоять перед лицом своего осознанного

Внимание. ...Внимание к себе основанное на любви не тяготит, не вызывает сопротивление. Сопrotивляется тот, кто испытывает к себе нелюбовь, брезгливость, стыд

Забота. ... Заботится о себе учит мать. Заботливая мать - любящая мать. Так с детства у человека выстраивается функционал заботы о себе, основанной на любви. Забота - это любовь в действиях жизни.

Уважение. Любовь почитает в себе столь высокое достоинство, сколь смогла дать вся история человеческой культуры. но самую сильную прививку любви к человеку, к себе в том числе, дал подвиг Сына Божьего.

Ответственность. Как можно понять ответственность за себя? Как готовность принимать все последствия своих решений. Любовь к себе притягивает свои решения к своему сердцу. Любовь повышает градус ответственности. Но не градус тревоги. Наоборот, любовь снижает тревогу и повышает готовность отвечать за всё, что сделал сам. Связано это, по-видимому, с тем, что внимание к себе позволяет видеть и знать себя более ясно. Темное бессознательное становится либо познаваемым, либо осязаемым настолько, насколько меняется взгляд человека на самого себя.

Отношение к себе, или самоотношение, было предметом исследований не раз, как в европейской, так и в российской литературе (Сарджавеладзе, Пантелеев, Столин). К себе человек может относиться по-разному. Увы, в

It is important to note that this work is not with emotional reactions or with affects, but with the functionality of strategies, i.e. with a set of actions, a set of skills and habits.

Such therapeutic practice seems to be very promising. And not only with Christian clients, because we can talk about love with everyone, and everyone wants it. But there are also limitations. If the couple or the client assures himself that he does not love (himself or his partner), it is hardly applicable.

психотерапии мы чаще сталкиваемся с негативным или неопознанным отношением к себе.

В терапии не редко приходится работать с неврозом “нелюбви” к себе. Клиент может испытывать неприязнь к себе, или к своим реакциям, к своим привычкам, к своим зависимостям. Мы лучше знаем, как люди нелюбят себя. Такая нелюбовь может проявляться в причинении себе различного ущерба, в небрежном отношении к своим потребностям, в насилии над собой. С такими клиентами трудно разработать стратегии познания своих потребностей и удовлетворениям их.

В этих случаях можно говорить о терапии любви к себе, как стратегии, в которой может сочетаться познание себя и внимание к себе. Это можно назвать исцеление любовью. Любовью к себе. И это не эгоизм. Наоборот, это альтруизм, так как заботясь о себе, человек снимает ответственность с других, освобождая других от необходимости заботиться о себе.

Важно отметить, это работа не с эмоциональными реакциями, не с аффектами, а с функционалом стратегий. Т.е. с набором действий, набором навыков и привычек.

Такая терапевтическая практика представляется весьма перспективной. Причем не только с клиентами - христианами, ведь о любви можно говорить со всеми, и все её желают. Но есть и ограничения. Если пара или сам клиент уверяет себя, что он не любит (себя или партнера). Если пара или сам клиент уверяет себя, что он не любит (себя или партнера), то такая методика не применима.



**Snowdrops**



**Autumn Sunshine**





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(Australia)**

## **Comment to „Active love as psychotherapeutic telos“**

I enjoyed reading Andrey Lorgus' essay on "Active love as psychotherapeutic telos", and the wisdom of active love therapy, with its emphasis in therapy on facilitating loving action, rather than emphasising feelings or even thoughts, which can accentuate "stuckness" for people wanting help from counselling. Thank you, Andrey, for your essay.

Emphasis upon action can help release a follow-through of the process, in this case, of love, in relational responses.

Of course, the inner life of a person is so rich: in its will, motivations, reactions, beliefs, values and evaluations, thoughts, attitudes, considerations and reflections, emotions, sensations, and so on. Emotions (as the name suggests) do move us into actions or responses (which can sometimes appear to be inaction), but often thoughts and feelings either become a preoccupation or else are simply not resolved for decision towards action (or response) in fulfilling a (hopefully) good and proper outcome. The therapeutic relationship can facilita-

te the client's inner processing towards action and outcomes.

If I can venture to add some thoughts ...

Would we not agree that the telos or goal has its highest destiny (as expressed in the first commandment by God, as brought down by Moses); to love the LORD our God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength? As the great source of love is God, our Creator, then to accept the love of God and be loved, to love God in response, and to extend this love to all, and with all, within the context of God's creation, is our calling.

We might name this (that is, the love and worship of God as God) the vertical relationship, upon which the horizontal relationship – of loving others – depends. This horizontal relationship between people ultimately depends upon the greater, higher relationship with God. Otherwise -

“love” of neighbour’ can become mere co-dependency, or even mindless subjugation and slavery to the dominant one(s), or to the Group (whatever group that might be), where ‘love’

can be reduced to fear and fawning, and the human heart, motivation and morality are reduced to a level most appropriate to the mammalian ...

and/or

' "love" of self' can become a preoccupation with 'all things me', so that the self-idolatry and instincts cause a reduced level of heart and morality to something more and more akin to that appropriate for (dare we say) the reptilian!

But when people are in loving and grateful submission to God as God, having some understanding of the great love demonstrated in Christ, and by the presence of the Holy Spirit, both the love of self and love of neighbour are enabled, in each human person, to find their dignity, as *imago Dei*; spiritually alive and more fully human, free to truly love and be loved.

As far as the self-attitude is concerned, in close relationship with God through Christ, we can become better at loving and being loved, truthfully, graciously, and trustingly enough to be trainable in the discipline of self and in our relationships with others. We are all brothers and sisters of the same Father.

God's love is generative, and also regenerative. Love is always relational, and brings about the

good generation, or even regeneration, for loving actions or responses.

In Andrey's reference to Eric Fromm, it is also delightful to recognise those types of love activities which are so important: knowledge, attention, care, respect, responsibility. Again, it is not only in the love activities of the I-it, the I-myself, or the I-thou, but, most importantly, in the I-Thou relationship, that we find ourselves as both recipients and actors of love in the best of ways (to use some expressions of Martin Buber and C.S. Evans.)

Many people wanting help from counselling do have their own deep sense of God, and are hoping for encouragement as they try to work through their issues in their life with faith, or in the light of their faith.

Due to the huge range of people's experiences, situations, states and dispositions, sensitivity from the practitioner to the whole range of willingness (or lack of willingness) to encourage foundational spirituality for life is important, as is sensitivity on the part of the practitioner to a whole range of most appropriate responses, with which to lovingly respond.



Patrycja Ewa Longawa  
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Patrycja Ewa Longawa. Dyplomowana psychoterapeutka w trakcie procesu certyfikacji. Pracuje w nurcie integracyjnym łączącym m. in. podejście: psychodynamiczne, poznawczo-behawioralne oraz terapię schematu. Specjalizuje się w psychoterapii online. Należy do Stowarzyszenia Psychologów Chrześcijańskich. Jest także dyplomowaną arteterapeutką. Uzyskała dyplom magistra socjologii ze specjalizacją z zakresu psychosocjologii. Aktualnie w trakcie jednolitych studiów mgr z psychologii klinicznej i osobowości. W 2011 r. ukończyła także studia licencjackie na kierunku ekonomii.

Od 2017 r. rozpoczęła pracę w branży zdrowia psychicznego zaczynając od pracy w ośrodku leczenia zaburzeń odżywiania. Do marca 2024 r. zarządzała ośrodkiem psychoterapii i rozwoju SPES, który od początku współtworzyła w Rzeszowie.

## Finding the Balance Between Self-Sacrifice and Self-Care in Relationships to Maintain Healthy Love Dynamics

Issue: How to establish boundaries and practice self-care while nurturing close relationships.

### 1. Introduction

Regularly sacrificing oneself for others in relationships, though it may seem generous, can lead to serious consequences, as it often incurs a debt to oneself. Can loving those close to you and being overly empathetic lead to burnout?

## Znalezienie równowagi między samopoświęceniem a dbaniem o siebie w relacjach, czyli jak utrzymać zdrową dynamikę miłości.

Problem: Jak ustanawiać granice i praktykować dbanie o siebie przy jednoczesnym pielęgnowaniu bliskich relacji.

### 1. Wprowadzenie

Regularne poświęcanie się dla innych w relacjach, choć wydaje się być czymś wspaniałomyślnym, może prowadzić do poważnych konsekwencji, ponieważ robiąc to regularnie zaciągamy dług w stosunku do samych siebie. Czy

How can one wisely and healthily love both oneself and those around?

### **A. Definition of Self-Sacrifice in Relationships**

Analyzing this concept through the lens of an integrative psychotherapist with a Christian perspective, self-sacrifice in relationships is seen as a deep commitment to prioritize the welfare and development of another person above one's own desires, comfort, and ambitions. It often correlates with highly developed empathy and an ease in negating one's own emotions and needs. For believers, such regular self-sacrifice may be driven by a desire to emulate the acts of selfless love demonstrated by Jesus, the Son of God, who gave His life for the redemption of humanity. Saints also often exemplify this by embracing suffering as a moral ideal. These examples will resonate with the interior of a person prone to voluntarily resigning themselves for others. A sense of mission and individual purpose can thus be nurtured over many years. Interestingly, in schema therapy, the self-sacrifice schema appears in patterns from the "other-directed" area, where individuals believe it is their responsibility to make everyone feel good and solve other people's problems. Hence, prioritizing the needs, wishes, and desires of others over one's own. Most of the efforts of an individual of this nature will aim to quickly guess and satisfy the needs of those around them. It should be mentioned that such a person acts actively and voluntarily! Additionally, when they decide to satisfy their own needs, they may feel guilty. This pattern is frequently observed in professions that involve caring for others, such as nurses, psychologists, or therapists.

Self-sacrifice in relationships manifests through acts of service, kindness, forgiveness, and patience, aimed at fostering understanding, trust, and intimacy between partners. For example, it might involve sacrificing personal time and resources to support a partner during tough times, or choosing quick forgiveness and reconciliation after a conflict, even when one does not feel like it. Within the family, such an individual may take on a large share of household du-

kochając swoich bliźnich i będąc nadmiernie empatycznym, można doprowadzić siebie do wypalenia? Jak mądrze i zdrowo kochać siebie oraz osoby z otoczenia?

### **A. Definicja samopoświęcenia w relacjach**

Analizując tę koncepcję przez pryzmat integracyjnego psychoterapeuty przyjmującego perspektywę chrześcijańską - samopoświęcenie w relacjach jest rozumiane jako głębokie zaangażowanie w priorytetyzowanie dobra i rozwoju drugiej osoby ponad własne pragnienia, komfort i czasami ambicje. Często łączy się z bardzo silnie rozwiniętą empatią oraz łatwością w unieważnianiu własnych emocji oraz potrzeb. Dla osób wierzących takie regularne poświęcanie się może być spowodowane chęcią naśladowania czynów bezinteresownej miłości, którą ukazał Syn Boży oddając Swoje Życie na rzecz odkupienia ludzkości. Święci również niejednokrotnie świecą przykładem pokazującym zaparcie się siebie i przyjęcie cierpienia jako ideał moralny. Przykłady te będą współgrać z wnętrzem osoby mającej tendencje do dobrowolnego rezygnowania z siebie na rzecz innych. Poczucie misji, sensu i celu jednostki może być w ten sposób nawożone przez długie lata. Często możemy zobaczyć elementy schematu poświęcania siebie u zdrowych ludzi. Nierzadko nie towarzyszą mu poważne objawy kliniczne, pod warunkiem, że dana osoba ma wystarczająco dobry system wsparcia. Co ciekawe, w terapii schematu samopoświęcenia występuje w schematach z obszaru „nakierowanie na innych”, gdzie jednostki uważają, że ich odpowiedzialnością jest sprawić, by wszyscy czuli się dobrze, a cudze problemy zostały rozwiązane. Stąd przedkładanie potrzeb, życzeń i pragnień innych osób nad własne. Większość wysiłków takiej osoby będzie miała na celu, aby jak najszybciej odgadnąć i zaspokajać potrzeby otoczenia. Trzeba tu wspomnieć, że taki człowiek działa aktywnie i dobrowolnie! Mało tego, kiedy decyduje się zaspokajać swoje własne potrzeby to może pojawiać się u niego poczucie winy. Ten schemat występował będzie często u osób zawodowo zajmujących się opieką nad innymi oraz niesieniem im pomocy. Przykładem będą pielęgniarki, psychologowie czy terapeuci.



**Foot Washing**

ties hoping to protect others from suffering or difficult emotions. At work, they may regularly agree to compromises, work overtime, help everyone in need. They will engage in volunteering, projects, and often work for free. They will be a caretaker, rescuer, and the person you can always rely on. A person who agrees to help others at the expense of their own time, duties, often sleep. This sounds magnanimous, however, such behavior is difficult to sustain indefinitely, as everything has its price.

## **B. Self-Sacrifice vs. Self-Care**

Finding a balance between self-sacrifice and self-care is a complex, yet key aspect of nurturing flourishing relationships. It allows for maintaining a healthy love dynamic. As psychotherapists, we are personal witnesses to the interaction between giving oneself to our clients and caring for oneself, as we are somewhat immersed in their worlds. Self-sacrifice is often regarded as the foundation of virtuous behavior, especially in religious communities where the model of Jesus' selfless love serves as a guiding principle. However, while selflessness is commendable, it is essential to realize that neglecting one's own needs can ultimately undermine the very foundation of a healthy relationship. Let's look at a specific example. Namely the marriage of Michaela and Sebastian, who are deeply committed to serving their church community. Both Michaela and Sebastian are dedicated volunteers, often sacrificing their weekends and evenings to support various community activities. Although their commitment to serving others is admirable, they increasingly feel exhausted and disconnected from each other. Despite their shared values and love for each other, the constant demands of their additional work leave little time for intimacy, relaxation, or personal fulfillment. In their pursuit of self-sacrifice, they inadvertently neglect their own relational needs, leading to a slow accumulation of feelings of frustration. Another example of self-sacrifice. Let's look at the dynamics of the relationship between Dalia and Emil, who have been together for several years. Dalia is very caring, always putting the needs of others before her own. She often sacrifices her

Samoposwiecenie w związkach objawia się poprzez akty służby, życzliwości, przebaczenia i cierpliwości, mające na celu pielęgnowanie zrozumienia, zaufania i intymności między partnerami. Na przykład, może to obejmować poświęcanie osobistego czasu oraz zasobów, aby wspierać partnera w trudnych chwilach, lub wybieranie szybkiego przebaczenia i pojednania po konflikcie, nawet gdy osoba nie ma na to ochoty. Wewnątrz rodziny jednostka taka może przejmować dużą część obowiązków domowych mając nadzieję, że uchroni innych przed cierpieniem czy trudnymi emocjami. W pracy może godzić się regularnie na ustępstwa, pracować po godzinach, pomagać wszystkim w potrzebie. Będzie angażować się w wolontariaty, projekty i często pracować za darmo lub półdarmo. Będzie opiekunem, ratownikiem i tą osobą, na której zawsze można polegać. Człowiekiem, który zgodzi się pomóc innym kosztem swojego czasu, obowiązków, nierzadko snu. Brzmi to wspaniałomyślnie, jednakże trudno, by takie zachowanie mogło trwać bez konsekwencji w nieskończoność, albowiem wszystko ma swoją cenę.

## **B. Samoposwiecenie a dbanie o siebie**

Znalezienie równowagi między samoposwieceniem a dbaniem o siebie jest złożonym, lecz kluczowym aspektem pielęgnowania kwitnących relacji. Pozwala bowiem zadbać o zdrową dynamikę miłości. Jako psychoterapeuci, osobiście jesteśmy świadkami interakcji między daniem siebie innym a troską o siebie w życiu naszych klientów, ponieważ jesteśmy niejako zanurzeni w ich światach. Samoposwiecenie jest często traktowane jako podwalina cnotliwego zachowania, zwłaszcza w społecznościach religijnych, gdzie model bezinteresownej miłości Jezusa służy jako zasada przewodnia. Jednakże, chociaż bezinteresowność jest godna pochwały, niezbędne jest uświadomienie sobie, że zaniedbywanie własnych potrzeb może ostatecznie podważyć sam fundament zdrowej relacji. Przyjrzyjmy się konkretnemu przykładowi. A mianowicie małżeństwu Michaliny i Sebastiana, którzy są mocno zaangażowani w służbę swojej wspólnoty kościelnej. Zarówno Michalina, jak i Sebastian są oddanymi wolontariusza-

time and resources to support Emil in professional challenges, family issues, or health concerns. Although Emil appreciates Dalia's selflessness, he begins to notice her growing exhaustion and emotional withdrawal. Wanting to be an empathetic partner, Emil gently encourages Dalia to prioritize self-care and establish boundaries in their relationship - ones that matter to her. With Emil's support, Dalia gradually learns to balance her nurturing instincts with acts of self-care, such as spending time with friends, devoting herself to hobbies, and seeking professional support. As a result, their relationship has the potential to become more resilient, authentic, and satisfying for both parties. These examples may illustrate the subtle art of daily choices between self-sacrifice and self-care in relationships. Although giving to others is an essential expression of love and compassion, it must be balanced with intentional efforts to nurture one's own well-being. Finding this balance requires ongoing self-awareness, compassion, and commitment to mutual growth.

Healthy love dynamics refer to the patterns, behaviors, and interactions within a romantic relationship that promote mutual respect, emotional well-being, and growth for both partners. These dynamics are characterized by open communication, trust, empathy, and a shared commitment to the long-term health and happiness of the relationship. In such relationships, both partners feel valued, supported, and understood. They are able to openly express their thoughts, feelings, and needs without fear of judgment or rejection. There is a sense of emotional safety and security, as each partner is confident in the other's love and loyalty. Mutual respect will be the foundation of healthy love dynamics, with both partners recognizing each other's boundaries, autonomy, and individuality. Instead of seeking to control or manipulate, they should enhance each other's strengths, encouraging personal growth. Furthermore, healthy love dynamics involve a willingness to compromise, collaborate, and constructively resolve conflicts. Instead of avoiding difficult conversations or resorting to passive-aggressive behaviors, partners in healthy relationships approach challenges as opportunities to deve-

mi, często poświęcającymi swoje weekendy i wieczory na wsparcie różnych aktywności wspólnotowych. Chociaż ich zaangażowanie w służbę innym jest godne podziwu, coraz częściej czują się oni wyczerpani i oderwani od siebie. Mimo wspólnych wartości, jak i miłości do siebie, ciągłe wymagania ich dodatkowej pracy pozostawiają niewiele czasu na intymność, relaks czy osobiste spełnienie. W dążeniu do poświęcania siebie, niechcący zaniedbują swoje własne potrzeby relacyjne, co prowadzi do powolnej kumulacji uczuć frustracji.

Kolejny przykład samopoświęcenia. Przyjrzyjmy się dynamice relacji między Dalią a Emilem, którzy są razem od kilku lat. Dalia jest bardzo opiekuńcza, zawsze stawiającą potrzeby innych przed swoimi własnymi. Często poświęca swój czas i zasoby, aby wspierać Emila w wyzwaniach zawodowych, problemach rodzinnych czy kwestiach zdrowotnych. Chociaż Emil docenia bezinteresowność Dalii, zaczyna zauważać jej rosnące wyczerpanie i emocjonalne wycofanie. Chcąc być empatycznym partnerem, Emil delikatnie zachęca Dalię do priorytetyzowania dbania o siebie i ustanawiania granic w ich relacji - takich na których to jej zależy. Ze wsparciem Emila, Dalia stopniowo uczy się równoważyć swoje instynkty opiekuńcze z aktami dbania o siebie, takimi jak spędzanie czasu z przyjaciółmi, poświęcanie się hobby i poszukiwanie profesjonalnego wsparcia. W rezultacie ich relacja ma szansę stać się bardziej odporną, autentyczną i satysfakcjonującą dla obu stron.

Powyższe przykłady mogą ilustrować subtelną sztukę codziennych wyborów między samopoświęceniem a dbaniem o siebie w relacjach. Chociaż dawanie innym jest niezbędnym wyrazem miłości i współczucia, musi być zrównoważone z intencjonalnymi wysiłkami pielęgnowania własnego dobrego samopoczucia. Znalezienie tej równowagi wymaga ciągłej samoświadomości, współczucia i zaangażowania w wzajemny rozwój.

Zdrowa dynamika miłości odnosi się bowiem do wzorców, zachowań i interakcji w ramach romantycznej relacji, które promują wzajemny szacunek, dobrostan emocjonalny i wzrost dla obu partnerów. Wspomniana dynamika charakteryzuje się otwartą komunikacją, zaufaniem, empatią i wspólnym zaangażowaniem w długo-

lop the relationship and understand each other. Active listening, trying to understand the other side's perspective, and seeking solutions that satisfy both sides, which respect the needs and desires of the partners, can help. Generally speaking, healthy love dynamics foster a deep sense of connection, intimacy, and fulfillment within the relationship. They provide a solid foundation for jointly overcoming life's challenges, celebrating each other's successes, and navigating the highs and lows of life as a cohesive team.

## **2. Understanding Self-Sacrifice**

### **A. External Expectations of Selflessness**

Cultural and societal expectations often place significant emphasis on selflessness in relationships, shaping our understanding of love, commitment, and partnership. In various cultures and historical contexts, the idea of sacrificing one's own needs and desires for the sake of others is glorified as a noble ideal. This emphasis on selflessness can be traced back to religious teaching, philosophical doctrines, and cultural narratives that extol the virtues of putting others before oneself. Similarly, traditional gender roles often suggest that women, in particular, should prioritize the needs of their spouses, children, and family members above their own aspirations and needs. These expectations can exert significant pressure on individuals to suppress their own desires and conform to societal norms of selflessness. Additionally, Catholicism certainly plays a significant role in shaping cultural attitudes towards self-sacrifice and selflessness (not only in Poland). The concept of martyrdom and suffering for the sake of others is deeply rooted in church teaching, with saints and religious figures revered for their acts of selflessness and sacrifice. This influence may perpetuate the belief that enduring hardship and putting others first are signs of moral virtue and spiritual maturity. A leading example of a Polish saint who never spared himself in service despite chronic illness might be Father Maksymilian Kolbe. He ultimately died voluntarily giving his life for another person in a concentration camp. The saint was proclaimed a "martyr of love." Such behavior is

terminowe zdrowie i szczęście związku. W takich relacjach obaj partnerzy czują się doceniani, wspierani i rozumiani. Są w stanie otwarcie wyrażać swoje myśli, uczucia i potrzeby bez obawy przed oceną lub odrzuceniem. Istnieje w ich związku poczucie emocjonalnego bezpieczeństwa i pewności, gdyż każdy partner ma pewność co do miłości i lojalności drugiej strony. Wzajemny szacunek będzie filarem zdrowej dynamiki miłości, przy czym obaj partnerzy powinni uznawać granice, autonomię i indywidualność drugiej osoby. Zamiast dążyć do kontroli lub manipulacji, powinni rozwijać wzajemne swoje mocne strony, zachęcając do osobistego wzrostu. Ponadto, zdrowa dynamika miłości wiąże się z gotowością do kompromisu, współpracy i konstruktywnego rozwiązywania konfliktów. Zamiast unikać trudnych rozmów lub uciekać się do zachowań biernie agresywnych, partnerzy w zdrowych relacjach podchodzą do wyzwań jak do okazji do rozwoju relacji i zrozumienia. Pomóc może tu aktywne słuchanie, próba zrozumienia perspektywy drugiej strony i poszukiwanie rozwiązań zadowalających obie strony, które respektują potrzeby i pragnienia partnerów. Ogólnie rzecz biorąc, zdrowa dynamika miłości sprzyja głębokiemu poczuciu połączenia, intymności i spełnienia w ramach relacji. Stanowi solidną podstawę do wspólnego przezwyciężania życiowych wyzwań, celebrowania sukcesów drugiej strony i przechodzenia przez wzloty i upadki życia jako zgrany zespół.

## **2. Zrozumienie samopoświęcenia**

### **A. Zewnętrzne oczekiwania dotyczące bezinteresowności**

Kulturowe i społeczne oczekiwania często kładą znaczący nacisk na bezinteresowność w relacjach, kształtując nasze rozumienie miłości, zaangażowania i partnerstwa. W różnych kulturach i kontekstach historycznych idea poświęcenia własnych potrzeb i pragnień na rzecz innych jest gloryfikowana jako szlachetny ideał. Ten nacisk na bezinteresowność można prześledzić w nauczaniu religijnym, doktrynach filozoficznych i narracjach kulturowych, które wysławiają cnoty stawiania innych przed sobą. Podobnie, tradycyjne role płciowe często pod-



often seen as an ideal of behavior by religious people. To see what the Holy Scripture encourages us to do, let's look at a few Bible verses related to self-sacrifice in relationships:

John 15:13:

“Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

Philippians 2:3-4:

“Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

1 Corinthians 13:4-7:

“Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

Romans 12:10:

“Love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor.”

These verses, if taken as a specific pattern of ideal love, can pose quite a challenge! They emphasize the importance of self-sacrifice, humility, and unconditionality in relationships, drawing inspiration from the selfless love of Jesus Christ. They may also explain how a person with a strong tendency to sacrifice might easily find justification for their behavior in Holy Scripture, as they speak of great ideals. However, the pressure to conform to these stereotypes of selflessness can be burdensome for individuals and romantic relationships. Women, in particular, may experience burnout, regret, and a sense of unfulfilled potential as they try to balance the competing demands of work, family, and social expectations. Men, on the other hand, may struggle with feelings of inadequacy or guilt if they are unable to meet traditional expectations of being the sole provider and protector. Despite these challenges, there is a growing awareness and advocacy for more equal and balanced relationships. Some coup-

powiadają nam, że kobiety, w szczególności powinny priorytetyzować potrzeby swoich małżonków, dzieci i członków rodziny ponad własne aspiracje i potrzeby. Te oczekiwania mogą wywierać znaczącą presję na jednostki, aby tłumiły swoje własne pragnienia i dostosowywały się do społecznych norm poświęcania siebie na rzecz innych. Ponadto, katolicyzm z pewnością odgrywa znaczącą rolę w kształtowaniu kulturowych postaw wobec samopoświęcenia i bezinteresowności (nie tylko w Polsce). Koncepcja męczeństwa i cierpienia dla dobra innych jest głęboko zakorzeniona w nauczaniu kościoła, z świętymi i postaciami religijnymi czczonymi za ich akty bezinteresowności oraz poświęcenia. Wspomniany wpływ może utrzymywać przekonanie, że znoszenie trudności i stawianie innych na pierwszym miejscu są znakami moralnej cnoty i dojrzałości duchowej. Czołowym przykładem polskiego świętego, który mimo przewlekłej choroby nigdy się w służbie nie oszczędzał może być O. Maksymilian Kolbe. Ostatecznie zmarł oddając dobrowolnie życie za innego człowieka w obozie koncentracyjnym. Święty ten okrzyknięty został „męczennikiem miłości”. Takie postępowanie bywa postrzegane jako ideał zachowania przez osoby religijne. Aby szerzej zobaczyć do czego namawia nas Pismo Święte, przyjrzyjmy się kilku wersetom biblijnym związanym z samopoświęceniem w relacjach:

Jan 15:13:

„Nikt nie ma większej miłości od tej, gdy ktoś życie swoje oddaje za przyjaciół swoich.”

Filipian 2:3-4:

„Nie czyńcie niczego z pobudek kłótniowych ani z próżnej chwały, ale w pokorze uważajcie jedni drugich za wyższych od siebie; nie szukajcie każdy własnej korzyści, lecz każdy też i tego, co służy drugim.”

1 Koryntian 13:4-7:

„Miłość jest cierpliwa, jest łaskawa; miłość nie zazdrości, nie szuka poklasku, nie unosi się pychą; nie dopuszcza się do nieprzyzwoitości, nie szuka swego, nie daje się ponieść gniewowi, nie pamięta złego; nie cieszy się z niesprawiedliwości, lecz współweseli się z prawdą. Wszyst-



**Breaking Bread**

les question traditional gender roles and adopt a more collaborative approach to decision-making, household duties, and caregiving.

Popular media, literature, and romantic narratives often perpetuate the myth of the "selfless hero," portraying individuals who sacrifice their own happiness for the sake of their beloved as paragons of virtue and moral integrity. An extreme case is the symbolic giving of one's life for the person one is in love with. Here, an example can be the character played by Leonardo DiCaprio in the popular movie "Titanic". Such romanticization of self-sacrifice can create unrealistic expectations in relationships, leading individuals to believe that true love requires complete devotion and selflessness at all costs. As a result, many people feel obligated to prioritize their partner's needs and desires over their own, even if it means neglecting their own well-being and personal fulfillment. It is important to realize the limitations of these cultural and societal expectations of selflessness in relationships, because although acts of self-sacrifice can be significant expressions of love and devotion, they should not come at the expense of one's own happiness, autonomy, and dignity. Fortunately, in recent years, psychoeducation has become more accessible, leading to greater recognition of the importance of self-care, boundary setting, and mutual respect in relationships, as couples are increasingly encouraged to openly communicate about their needs and expectations.

## **B. Side Effects of Excessive Self-Sacrifice**

The impact of excessive self-sacrifice on an individual's well-being and the dynamics of relationships can be truly serious. In everyday life, we can see that laborious tasks that do not bring respect or financial benefits are consistently undertaken by people entangled in the self-sacrifice schema. When such individuals consistently prioritize the needs and desires of others over their own, they may experience a range of negative consequences. One of the most significant effects of excessive self-sacrifice is the weakening of self-esteem and self-

ko znosi, wszystkiemu wierzy, we wszystkim pokłada nadzieję, wszystko przetrzyma.”

Rzymian 12:10:

„W miłości braterskiej jedni drugich miejcie za wyższych od siebie.”

Powyższe wersety, gdyby brać je za konkretny wzór idealnej miłości mogą stanowić nie lada wyzwanie! Podkreślają znaczenie samopoświęcenia, pokory i bezwarunkowości w relacjach, czerpiąc inspirację z bezinteresownej miłości Jezusa Chrystusa. Mogą też wyjaśniać jak osoba z silną tendencją do poświęcania się może łatwo znaleźć uzasadnienie dla swojego postępowania w Piśmie Świętym, mówią bowiem o wielkich ideałach. Jednakże, presja dostosowania się do tych stereotypów bezinteresowności może być obciążająca dla jednostek, jak i relacji romantycznych. Kobiety, w szczególności, mogą doświadczać wypalenia, żalu i poczucia niespełnionego potencjału, gdy próbują pogodzić konkurujące ze sobą wymagania pracy, rodziny oraz społecznych oczekiwań. Mężczyźni, z kolei, mogą zmagać się z poczuciem niedoskonałości lub winy, jeśli nie są w stanie spełnić tradycyjnych oczekiwań bycia jedynym żywicielem i obrońcą. Pomimo tych wyzwań, rośnie świadomość i działania na rzecz bardziej równych oraz zrównoważonych relacji. Niektóre pary kwestionują tradycyjne role płciowe i przyjmują bardziej współpracujące podejście do podejmowania decyzji, obowiązków domowych i opieki.

Popularne media, literatura i romantyczne narracje często utrwalają mit „bezinteresownego bohatera” przedstawiając osoby, które poświęcają własne szczęście dla dobra ukochanej osoby. Skrajnym przypadkiem jest symboliczne oddanie swojego życia za osobę, w której jednostka jest zakochana. Tu przykładem może być postać grana przez Leonardo Di Caprio w popularnym filmie „Titanic”. Taka romantyzacja samopoświęcenia może tworzyć nierealistyczne oczekiwania w relacjach, skłaniając jednostki do przekonania, że prawdziwa miłość wymaga całkowitego oddania i bezinteresowności za wszelką cenę. W rezultacie, wiele osób czuje się zobowiązanych do priorytetyzowania potrzeb i

worth. Constantly putting others first can lead to feelings of inadequacy and a blurred sense of identity. Additionally, individuals who neglect their own needs and desires may experience increased levels of stress, anxiety, and burnout. This chronic "self-neglect" can manifest in physical symptoms such as fatigue, headaches, and digestive problems, as well as other psychological symptoms like depression and emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, excessive self-sacrifice can create an imbalance relating to issues of dominance and submission within relationships, which fosters a sense of dependence. The partner who consistently sacrifices their own needs may accumulate resentment or become passively aggressive, while the recipient of this "selflessness" may feel burdened by their partner's expectations. Over time, these processes can undermine trust, intimacy, and emotional connection within the relationship. Additionally, excessive self-sacrifice can hinder personal growth and fulfillment. Individuals who prioritize the needs of others at the expense of their own aspirations and passions may find themselves in unfulfilling roles or relationships, unable to pursue their own goals and dreams. This sense of stagnation can lead to feelings of regret, bitterness, and loss of purpose. Moreover, children raised in environments where one or both parents consistently prioritize the needs of others over their own may internalize unhealthy patterns of selflessness and neglect their own well-being in adulthood. This perpetuates a cycle of unhealthy dependency, as well as dysfunction in families and relationships.

### **3. Client Problems**

#### **A. Invalidating One's Own Needs and Desires**

Individuals who often sacrifice themselves for others may frequently experience psychosomatic symptoms. These may include back pain, body pain, abdominal pain, or chronic fatigue. This hidden cost of being perpetually helpful may mean that only when these individuals suffer health-wise, they do not feel guilty about asking someone for help. However, it is difficult for people who believe, for example, that they are stronger than others and will always manage, or that helping others makes them

pragnień partnera ponad własne, nawet jeśli oznacza to zaniedbanie własnego dobrostanu i osobistego spełnienia.

Ważne jest uświadomienie sobie ograniczeń tych kulturowych i społecznych oczekiwań bezinteresowności w relacjach, bo chociaż akty samopoświęcenia mogą być znaczącymi wyrazami miłości i oddania, nie powinny one odbywać się kosztem własnego szczęścia, autonomii i godności. Na szczęście, w ostatnich latach coraz bardziej przystępna staje się psychoedukacja, dzięki czemu następuje coraz większe uznawanie znaczenia dbania o siebie, ustanawiania granic i wzajemnego szacunku w ramach relacji, ponieważ pary są coraz częściej zachęcane do otwartej komunikacji na temat swoich potrzeb i oczekiwań.

#### **B. Skutki uboczne nadmiernego samopoświęcenia**

Wpływ nadmiernego samopoświęcenia na dobrostan jednostki i dynamikę relacji może być naprawdę poważny. W codzienności możemy zauważyć, że pracochłonne zadania, które nie przysparzają szacunku ani finansowych korzyści, stale są podejmowane te same osoby - uwikłane w schemat poświęcania się. Gdy takie jednostki konsekwentnie priorytetyzują potrzeby i pragnienia innych ponad własne, mogą doświadczać szeregu negatywnych konsekwencji, zarówno osobistych, jak relacyjnych. Jednym z najbardziej znaczących efektów nadmiernego samopoświęcenia jest osłabianie się poczucia własnej wartości i samooceny. Ciągłe stawianie innych na pierwszym miejscu może prowadzić do uczuć niedoskonałości i rozmytego poczucia tożsamości. Ponadto, jednostki, które zaniedbują własne potrzeby oraz pragnienia, mogą doświadczać wzrostu poziomu stresu, lęku i wypalenia. To przewlekłe „samozaniedbanie” może objawiać się fizycznymi symptomami, takimi jak zmęczenie, bóle głowy i problemy trawienne, jak również psychologicznymi symptomami, takimi jak depresja czy emocjonalne wyczerpanie.

Co więcej, nadmierne samopoświęcenie może tworzyć nierównowagę odnoszącą się do kwestii dominacji oraz uległości w ramach relacji, sprzyjając poczuciu zależności. Partner, który konsekwentnie poświęca własne potrzeby,

more valuable. Conversely, they may feel guilty for not helping, making it hard for them to step back from constantly taking on new responsibilities. The difficulty with prioritizing personal needs and desires in relationships is a fairly common challenge. This problem often arises from a variety of factors, including upbringing, past experiences, and social expectations. From an early age, individuals may be socialized to elevate the needs of others above their own, leading to patterns of selflessness that persist into adulthood. Additionally, individuals who have experienced trauma or neglect in their early, formative years may have difficulty recognizing and assertively expressing their own needs, fearing abandonment or rejection if they authentically express themselves. In many cultures, especially those with collectivist values, there is an emphasis on putting the needs of the group or family above individual desires. This can create pressure on individuals to suppress their own needs and desires in order to maintain harmony and cohesion within the relationship. Moreover, individuals with low self-esteem or who fear conflict may find it particularly difficult to assert their own needs in relationships. Bringing the difficulty with personal needs into relationships requires self-awareness, assertiveness, and a willingness to question ingrained beliefs and patterns of behavior. It involves understanding that prioritizing personal needs is not selfish, but crucial for maintaining emotional health and fostering authentic relationships with others. Individuals may need to learn to defend themselves within the relationship. This can be a challenging process, but with patience, self-compassion, and support from a therapist or trusted loved ones, individuals can learn to prioritize their own well-being while also nurturing meaningful relationships.

### **B. Where Do These Difficult Emotions Come From?**

Feeling exhausted or resentful due to excessive self-sacrifice is a common experience. It affects many people in romantic relationships. When individuals consistently elevate the needs and desires of others above their own, they may neglect their own well-being and emotional

może kumulować w ten sposób żal lub stać się biernie agresywny, podczas gdy odbiorca tej „bezinteresowności” może czuć się obciążony ciężarem oczekiwań swojego partnera. Z biegiem czasu, te procesy mogą podważać zaufanie, intymność oraz emocjonalne połączenie w ramach relacji.

Dodatkowo, nadmierne samopoświęcenie może hamować osobisty rozwój i spełnienie. Jednostki, które priorytetyzują potrzeby innych kosztem własnych aspiracji i pasji, mogą znaleźć się w niespełniających rolach lub relacjach, niezdolnych do dążenia do własnych celów i marzeń. To poczucie stagnacji może zaś prowadzić do uczuć żalu, goryczy i utraty celu. Mało tego, dzieci wychowywane w środowiskach, gdzie jeden lub obaj rodzice konsekwentnie wysuwają na pierwszy plan potrzeby innych ponad własne, mogą internalizować niezdrowe wzorce bezinteresowności i zaniedbywać własne poczucie dobrostanu w dorosłości. To utrwała cykl niezdrowej zależności, a także dysfunkcje w rodzinach i relacjach.

## **3. Problemy klientów**

### **A. Unieważnianie własnych potrzeb oraz pragnień**

Jednostki często poświęcające się innym nierzadko odczuwają objawy psychosomatyczne. Będą to na przykład bóle pleców, ciała, brzucha czy chroniczne zmęczenie. To ukryty koszt bycia wiecznie pomocnym. Bywa, że kiedy osoby te zdrowotnie cierpią, tylko wtedy nie czują się winne prosząc kogoś o pomoc. Jednak trudno z tego nieustannego brania na siebie nowych odpowiedzialności zrezygnować osobom, które wierzą w to, że np. są silniejsi niż inni, a przecież zawsze sobie poradzą, pomagając innym są bardziej wartościowi, albo odwrotnie - nie pomagając czują się winni. Trudność z priorytetyzacją osobistych potrzeb i pragnień w relacjach jest dość powszechnym wyzwaniem. Ten problem często wynika z różnorodnych czynników, w tym wychowania, doświadczeń z przeszłości i oczekiwań społecznych. Od wczesnego wieku, jednostki mogą być socjalizowane do wynoszenia potrzeb innych ponad własne, prowadząc do wzorców bezinteresowności, które utrzymują się w dorosłości. Ponadto, osoby, które doświadczyły traumy lub zaniedbania

needs. This can lead to feelings of exhaustion, burnout, and distress. In addition, excessive self-sacrifice can create an imbalance, fostering bitterness towards the partner who seems to benefit from the individual's selflessness. It is worth establishing boundaries and remembering to take care of oneself in such cases. This process involves redefining beliefs about love and self-worth, enabling individuals to protect their own well-being. This may include practicing assertiveness skills, such as saying "no," expressing needs and desires, and setting limits on what they are willing to tolerate. It may also be helpful to seek support from a therapist or psychologist. They can help clarify and address issues, which may lead to positive changes and more satisfying relationships for the individual.

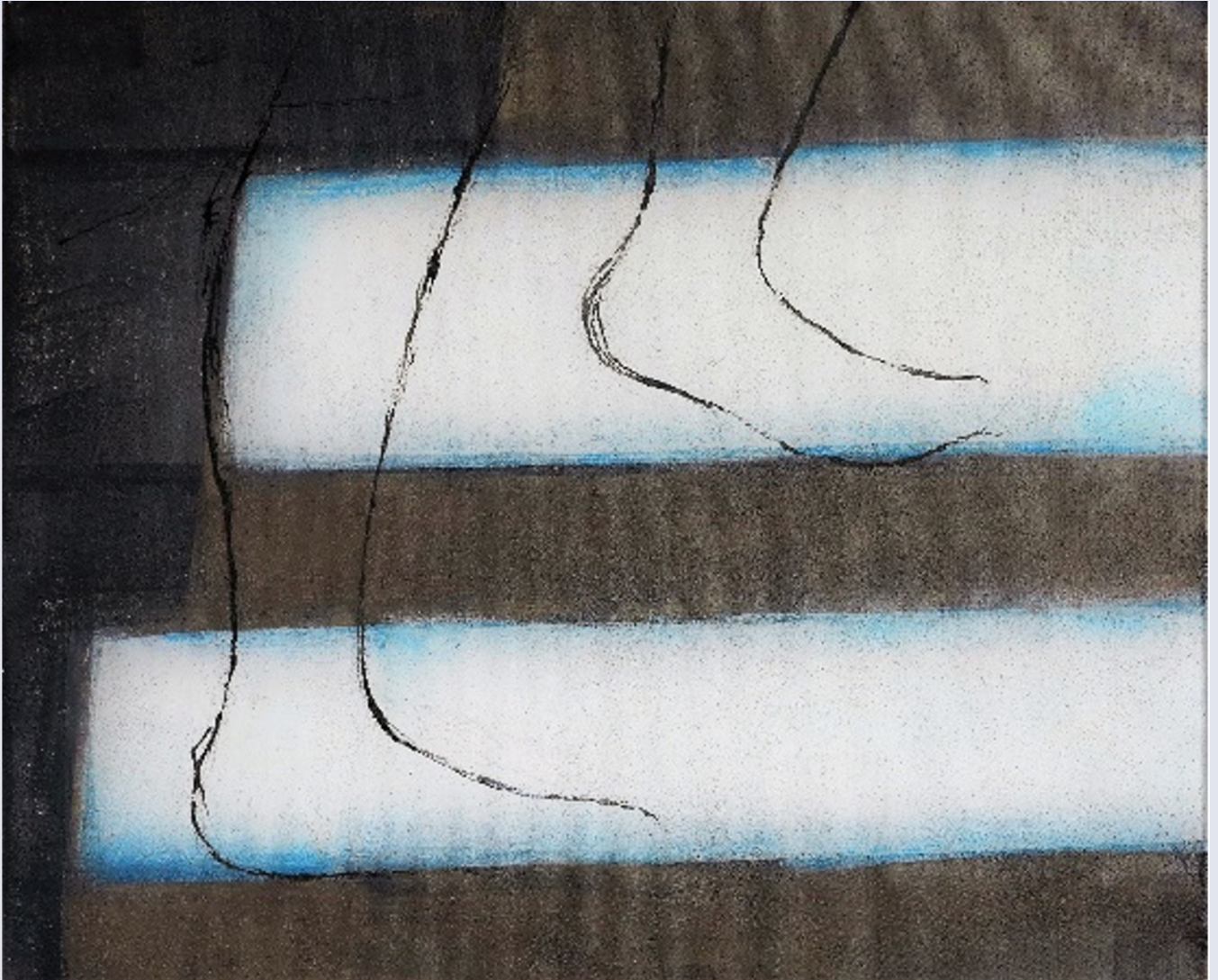
### **C. Boundaries Serving Love**

Struggling with establishing boundaries while maintaining closeness in relationships is a challenge. Boundaries are essential for protecting one's own well-being, autonomy, and identity, but they can also create tension and conflict within relationships if not communicated effectively or if clumsily implemented after a long duration of the relationship. Individuals may fear that setting boundaries will lead to rejection or conflict, so they may avoid assertively expressing their needs, resulting in feelings of resentment, frustration, and a sense of being overwhelmed by the demands of the relationship. However, the lack of establishing boundaries can push towards emotional exhaustion and loss of self-identity. Finding a balance between maintaining closeness and establishing boundaries requires open communication, empathy, and mutual respect. It involves recognizing that boundaries are not for building walls, but for creating space for mutual growth. By establishing boundaries with clarity, compassion, and assertiveness, individuals can create healthier, more satisfying close relationships. This may involve identifying personal values and priorities, clearly communicating these matters to the partner, and negotiating mutually acceptable boundaries that respect the needs and desires of both parties. It may also be helpful to practice self-compassion and self-care, as individuals

w swoich wczesnych, co za tym idzie formujących je latach, mogą mieć trudności z rozpoznaniem i asertywnym wyrażaniem własnych potrzeb, obawiając się porzucenia lub odrzucenia, jeśli wyrażą siebie autentycznie. W wielu kulturach, zwłaszcza tych o wartościach kolektywistycznych, kładzie się nacisk na stawianie potrzeb grupy lub rodziny ponad indywidualne pragnienia. Może to stwarzać presję na jednostki, aby tłumili własne potrzeby i pragnienia w celu utrzymania harmonii i spójności w ramach relacji. Ponadto, jednostki o niskiej samoocenie lub obawiające się konfliktu mogą uważać za szczególnie trudne zaznaczanie własnych potrzeb w relacjach. Nazwanie trudności z wnoszeniem osobistych potrzeb w relacjach wymaga samoświadomości, asertywności i gotowości do kwestionowania zakorzenionych przekonań oraz wzorców zachowań. Obejmuje to zrozumienie tego, że priorytetyzacja osobistych potrzeb nie jest egoistyczna, ale kluczowa dla utrzymania zdrowia emocjonalnego i pielęgnowania autentycznych relacji z innymi ludźmi. Jednostki mogą potrzebować nauczyć się bronić siebie w ramach relacji. Może to być trudny proces, ale z cierpliwością, samowspółczuciem i wsparciem ze strony terapeuty lub zaufanych bliskich, jednostki mogą nauczyć się priorytetyzować własny dobrostan, jednocześnie pielęgnowując znaczące relacje.

### **B. Skąd te trudne emocje?**

Odczuwanie wyczerpania lub urazy z powodu nadmiernego samopoświęcenia jest powszechnym doświadczeniem. Dotyka wielu osób w relacjach romantycznych. Kiedy jednostki konsekwentnie wynoszą potrzeby i pragnienia innych ponad własne, mogą zaniedbywać własny dobrostan i swoje emocjonalne potrzeby. Może to prowadzić właśnie do uczuć wyczerpania, wypalenia i odczuwania presji. Ponadto, nadmierne samopoświęcenie może tworzyć nierównowagę sprzyjając odczuwaniu goryczy wobec partnera, który zdaje się korzystać z bezinteresowności jednostki. Warto w takim przypadku ustanawiać granice oraz pamiętać o dbaniu o siebie. Ten proces wiąże się z redefinicją przekonań na temat miłości i własnej wartości, umożliwiając jednostkom chronienie własnego



Up: Step

cope with the discomfort and uncertainty that may arise from establishing and enforcing boundaries. Of course, great assistance in the process of effectively establishing boundaries in a relationship can be provided by a psychotherapist or psychologist, as for many people affected by this issue, it may seem to be a challenge beyond their strength.

#### **4. Therapeutic Approaches**

##### **A. Beliefs and Motivations**

Exploring the underlying beliefs and motivations for self-sacrifice is a fundamental aspect of therapeutic work. In therapy, individuals are encouraged to explore the sources of their tendencies to self-sacrifice, which may be rooted in childhood experiences, cultural influences, or interpersonal dynamics. By examining the underlying beliefs and motivations driving self-sacrifice, people can gain insight into why they prioritize the needs of others over their own. This exploration often involves identifying key beliefs about love, worth, and identity that contribute to patterns of self-neglect. For example, individuals may have beliefs such as "I am only worthy of love if I sacrifice myself for others" or "My needs are less important than the needs of others." These beliefs may stem from early experiences of conditional love or neglect, leading individuals to equate self-sacrifice with love and validation. Additionally, individuals may uncover unconscious motivations for self-sacrifice, such as a desire for acceptance, fear of abandonment, or a need to avoid conflict. By bringing these underlying beliefs and motivations to conscious awareness, individuals can begin to question and transform them, fostering a more balanced and compassionate relationship with themselves. Therapists may use a variety of therapeutic techniques to explore underlying beliefs and motivations for self-sacrifice, including cognitive-behavioral therapy, schema therapy, psychodynamic therapy, and mindfulness-based approaches. Through this exploration, individuals can gain a deeper understanding of the roots of their tendencies to self-sacrifice and begin to care for greater self-awareness and self-confidence in their relationships.

dobrostanu. Może to obejmować praktykowanie umiejętności asertywności, takich jak mówienie „nie”, wyrażanie potrzeb i pragnień oraz ustanawianie limitów tego, co są gotowe tolerować. Może być również pomocne poszukiwanie wsparcia u terapeuty lub psychologa, który pomoże pewne rzeczy zobaczyć z boku i je wspólnie ponazywać, co ostatecznie może doprowadzić do pozytywnych zmian i decyzji, które sprawią, że relacje budowane przez daną osobę staną się bardziej satysfakcjonujące.

##### **C. Granice służące miłości**

Walka z ustanawianiem granic przy jednoczesnym utrzymaniu bliskości w relacjach to wyzwanie. Granice są niezbędne dla ochrony własnego dobrostanu, autonomii i tożsamości, ale mogą również tworzyć napięcie oraz konflikt w ramach relacji, jeśli nie są komunikowane skutecznie lub jeśli są nieumiejętnie wdrażane po długim czasie trwania związku. Jednostki mogą obawiać się, że ustanowienie granic doprowadzi do odrzucenia lub konfliktu, więc mogą unikać asertywnego wyrażania swoich potrzeb, co może skutkować uczuciami żalu, frustracji i poczuciem przytłoczenia ilością wymagań w danej relacji. Jednakże, brak ustanowienia granic może popychać do emocjonalnego wyczerpania i utraty poczucia własnej tożsamości. Znalezienie równowagi między utrzymaniem bliskości a ustanawianiem granic wymaga otwartej komunikacji, empatii i wzajemnego szacunku. Obejmuje to rozpoznanie, że granice nie są po to, by budować mur, ale po to, by tworzyć przestrzeń dla wzajemnego wzrostu. Poprzez ustanawianie granic z jasnością, współczuciem i asertywnością, jednostki mogą tworzyć zdrowsze, bardziej satysfakcjonujące bliskie relacje. Może to obejmować rozeznanie osobistych wartości i priorytetów, jasne komunikowanie tych spraw partnerowi oraz negocjowanie wzajemnie akceptowalnych granic, które respektują potrzeby i pragnienia obu osób. Może być również pomocne praktykowanie samowspółczucia i dbania o siebie, gdy osoby mierzą się z dyskomfortem i niepewnością, które to mogą pojawić się podczas ustanawiania i egzekwowania granic. Oczywiście wielką po-



## B. Learning to Love Oneself

Encouraging self-compassion and self-care practices is a central element of therapeutic work in addressing the problem of excessive self-sacrifice. Immature defense mechanisms, which we work on with the client during psychotherapy, will prevent true self-love and love for others, applying at most an imitation of love, so it is important to seek one's identity - the true self, instead of reinforcing the false self. In therapy, individuals are encouraged to cultivate self-compassion, which involves treating oneself with kindness, acceptance, and understanding, especially during life's hardships or when experiencing suffering. Many people struggling with self-sacrifice have internalized harsh self-criticism and perfectionist tendencies, leading to feelings of unworthiness and imperfection. By practicing leaning towards oneself with compassion, individuals can learn to counteract these negative self-perceptions and cultivate a more nurturing and supportive relationship with themselves. Therapists may use techniques such as guided visualization, self-care exercises that involve kindly addressing oneself, and mindfulness practices to help clients begin the process of recognizing their needs in everyday life. In addition, therapists may work with individuals to develop self-care practices that prioritize their physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. This may involve seeking activities that bring joy, relaxation, and fulfillment, such as hobbies, exercise, creative expression, or spending time with loved ones. By recognizing self-care as a priority, people can replenish their energy reserves and reduce stress, which promotes greater resilience in the face of life's challenges. Therapists may also help individuals identify and challenge barriers to self-care, such as feelings of guilt, shame, or feelings of unworthiness. Through ongoing support and encouragement, individuals can gradually incorporate self-compassion and self-care practices into their daily routines. This, in turn, can increase their overall well-being and resilience.

mocą w procesie efektywnego ustanawiania granic w relacji może nieść psychoterapeuta czy psycholog, bowiem dla wielu osób, których ten problem dotyka wydaje się to być wyzwaniem ponad ich siły.

## 4. Podejścia Terapeutyczne

### A. Przekonania i motywacje

Badanie podstawowych przekonań i motywacji dla samopoświęcenia jest fundamentalnym aspektem pracy terapeutycznej. W terapii, jednostki są zachęcane do eksploracji źródeł swoich tendencji do samopoświęcenia, które mogą być zakorzenione w doświadczeniach z dzieciństwa, wpływach kulturowych lub dynamice interpersonalnej. Poprzez badanie podstawowych przekonań i motywacji napędzających samopoświęcenie, osoby mogą zdobyć wgląd w przyczyny, dla których priorytetyzują potrzeby innych ponad własne. Ta eksploracja często obejmuje identyfikację kluczowych przekonań na temat miłości, wartości i tożsamości, które przyczyniają się do wzorców samozaniedbania. Na przykład, jednostki mogą posiadać przekonania takie jak „Jestem godny miłości tylko wtedy, gdy poświęcam siebie dla innych” lub „Moje potrzeby są mniej ważne niż potrzeby innych.” Te przekonania mogą wynikać z wczesnych doświadczeń miłości warunkowej lub zaniedbania, prowadząc osoby do równania samopoświęcenia z miłością i walidacją. Dodatkowo, jednostki mogą odkrywać nieświadome motywacje dla samopoświęcenia, takie jak pragnienie akceptacji, strach przed porażką lub potrzeba unikania konfliktu. Poprzez wyciągnięcie na zewnątrz tych podstawowych przekonań i motywacji do świadomości, osoby mogą zacząć kwestionować oraz przekształcać je, sprzyjając bardziej zrównoważonej i współczującej relacji z samym sobą. Terapeuci mogą wykorzystywać różnorodne techniki terapeutyczne do eksploracji podstawowych przekonań i motywacji dla samopoświęcenia, w tym terapię poznawczo-behawioralną oraz schematu, terapię psychodynamiczną i podejścia oparte na uważności. Dzięki takiej eksploracji, jednostki mogą zdobyć głębsze zrozumienie korzeni swoich tendencji do samopoświęcenia i zacząć dbać o większą samoświadomość oraz sprawczość w swoich relacjach.

## C. Developing Assertiveness Skills

Many people struggling with self-sacrifice may also struggle with low assertiveness. Developing this skill for better communication may prove essential. Therapists can help individuals by teaching effective communication techniques, such as using 'I' statements (not 'you' statements), directly expressing their needs and desires, and establishing specific boundaries. Moreover, therapists can help individuals identify and challenge unhelpful beliefs and fears that contribute to difficulties with assertiveness, such as beliefs that conflict is inherently negative or fear of being seen as a selfish or demanding person. Through role-playing exercises and practice scenarios in real-life situations, individuals can build confidence and competence in assertively expressing their needs and boundaries in various interpersonal contexts. In therapy, it is also worth outlining the differences in attitudes: aggressive, submissive, and assertive. Therapists can also help individuals explore alternative ways of thinking about assertiveness, transforming it into a healthy and essential aspect of self-care and relationship maintenance. By developing assertiveness skills, individuals can gain greater self-confidence and self-respect. They can also create clearer and more authentic relationships with others. Through continuous practice and therapeutic support, individuals can gradually integrate assertiveness skills into their daily interactions, leading to more satisfying and balanced relationships.

## 5. Conclusion

### A. The Art of Catching Balance

It must be admitted that seeking a balance between self-sacrifice and self-care can be a truly difficult undertaking, especially for deeply spiritual people. Although selflessness is often seen as a virtue and is certainly commendable, it will be important to notice the potential pitfalls of excessive self-sacrifice, sometimes leading to self-neglect or burnout. In the pursuit of prioritizing the needs of others, individuals may unintentionally sabotage their own well-being and disrupt the health of their relationships.

## B. Nauka miłości w stosunku do siebie samego

Zachęcanie do samowspółczucia i praktyk dbania o siebie jest centralnym elementem pracy terapeutycznej przy problemie nadmiernego samopoświęcenia. Niedojrzałe mechanizmy obronne, nad którymi pracujemy z klientem w trakcie trwania psychoterapii, będą uniemożliwiać prawdziwe miłowanie siebie i innych, stosując co najwyżej imitację miłości, dlatego tak ważnym jest poszukiwanie swojej tożsamości - prawdziwego ja, zamiast wzmacniania fałszywego ja. W terapii, jednostki są zachęcane do kultywowania samowspółczucia, które obejmuje traktowanie siebie z życzliwością, akceptacją i zrozumieniem, szczególnie w momentach trudów życia lub podczas przeżywania cierpienia. Wiele osób borykających się z samopoświęceniem zinternalizowało surową samokrytykę oraz perfekcjonistyczne tendencje, prowadzące do uczuć niegodności i niedoskonałości. Poprzez praktykowanie pochylania się nad sobą ze współczuciem, jednostki mogą nauczyć się przeciwdziałać tym negatywnym percepcjom siebie i kultywować bardziej pielęgnowaną i wspierającą relację z samym sobą. Terapeuci mogą stosować techniki takie jak wizualizacja prowadzona, ćwiczenia samoopieki oraz nauki uprzejmego zwracania się do siebie i praktyki mindfulness, aby pomóc klientom rozpocząć proces dostrzegania swoich potrzeb w codziennym życiu. Dodatkowo, terapeuci mogą pracować z jednostkami nad rozwijaniem praktyk dbania o siebie, które priorytetyzują ich fizyczny, emocjonalny i psychologiczny dobrostan. Może to obejmować poszukiwanie aktywności, które przynoszą radość, relaks i spełnienie, takich jak hobby, ćwiczenia, ekspresja twórcza lub spędzanie czasu z bliskimi. Poprzez uznanie dbania o siebie jako priorytet, osoby mogą uzupełnić swoje rezerwy energetyczne, zmniejszyć stres, co sprzyja większej odporności w obliczu wyzwań życiowych. Terapeuci mogą również pomagać jednostkom identyfikować i kwestionować bariery dla dbania o siebie, takie jak poczucie winy, wstyd lub uczucia niegodności. Poprzez ciągłe wsparcie i zachętę, osoby mogą stopniowo włączać praktyki samowspółczucia oraz dbania o siebie do swojej codziennej rutyny. To zaś może zwiększać ich ogólny dobrostan i odporność.

This subtle art requires a deep understanding of one's own needs, boundaries, and motivations, as well as a willingness to question ingrained beliefs and accrued social expectations. It involves expanding self-awareness, self-compassion, and assertiveness, as well as applying clear communication and mutual respect within relationships. Although the journey towards finding this balance may be quite a challenge, it can also be deeply satisfying, as it offers the opportunity for personal growth, emotional fulfillment, and a more authentic connection with other people. By freeing oneself from the self-sacrifice schema, a client can gain a healthy balance between giving and taking. As a result, learn to treat one's own needs as just as important as the needs of others.

## **B. Love other people as well as you do yourself**

As therapists and psychologists, our role is to empower clients to prioritize their well-being while nurturing healthy relationships that provide a sense of fulfillment, not burnout. This empowerment begins with recognizing the importance of clients' experiences and emotions, helping them also realize the impact of excessive self-sacrifice on their lives and relationships. Through therapeutic exploration and reflection, clients can gain insight into the underlying beliefs and motivations driving their self-neglect, paving the way for meaningful change and growth. We support clients in discovering and applying self-compassion and self-care practices, guiding them towards actions and behaviors that lead their mind, body, and spirit to growth. Additionally, we work with clients to expand assertiveness skills, enabling them to effectively communicate their needs and boundaries within relationships. By creating a safe, supportive therapeutic environment, we provide clients with the tools, resources, and encouragement they need to navigate the complexities of self-sacrifice and self-care, ultimately helping them develop interpersonal relationships based on the pillars of authenticity, mutual respect but also on emotional well-being for both parties. After all, it is no coincidence that one of the most important commandments established by Jesus says, "Love your neighbor

## **C. Rozwój umiejętności asertywności**

Wiele osób borykających się z samopoświęceniem może również zmagać się z niską asertywnością. Rozwijanie tej umiejętności w celu lepszej komunikacji może okazać się niezbędne. Terapeuci mogą pomagać jednostkom ucząc skutecznych technik komunikacji, takich jak używanie oświadczeń rozpoczynających się od „ja” (a nie od „ty”), bezpośrednie wyrażanie swych potrzeb i pragnień oraz ustanawianie konkretnych granic. Dodatkowo, terapeuci mogą pomagać osobom identyfikować oraz kwestionować niepomocne przekonania czy obawy, które przyczyniają się do trudności z asertywnością. Takie jak przekonania, że konflikt jest z natury negatywny lub obawa przed byciem postrzeganym jako osoba samolubna lub wymagająca. Poprzez ćwiczenia odgrywania ról i scenariusze praktykowania w rzeczywistych sytuacjach życiowych, osoby mogą budować pewność siebie i kompetencje w asertywnym wyrażaniu swoich potrzeb oraz granic w różnych kontekstach interpersonalnych. W terapii warto również nakreślić różnice w postawach: agresywnej, uległej a asertywnej. Terapeuci mogą także pomagać osobom eksplorować alternatywne sposoby myślenia o asertywności, przekształcając ją w zdrowy i niezbędny aspekt dbania o siebie, a także utrzymania relacji. Poprzez rozwijanie umiejętności asertywności, jednostki mogą uzyskać większą pewność siebie oraz szacunek do siebie samych. Mogą również tworzyć jaśniejsze i bardziej autentyczne relacje z innymi. Poprzez ciągłą praktykę oraz wsparcie terapeutyczne, osoby mogą stopniowo integrować umiejętności asertywności do swoich codziennych interakcji, prowadząc do bardziej satysfakcjonujących i zrównoważonych relacji.

## **5. Zakończenie**

### **A. Sztuka łapania równowagi**

Trzeba przyznać, że poszukiwanie równowagi między samopoświęceniem a dbaniem o siebie może być naprawdę trudnym przedsięwzięciem, szczególnie dla osób głęboko uduchowionych. Chociaż bezinteresowność jest często postrzegana jako cnota i z pewnością jest godna pochwały, niebagatelne będzie zauważenie

as yourself." It explains the need for balance in the matter of loving because how can you love someone without loving yourself? Only when we know how to take care of ourselves and then others can we speak of a mature form of love. Because once a person reaches burnout, 'they cannot pour from an empty cup,' so it will be important to help clients implement practices of self-compassion and self-care at every stage of their lives.

Bible verses in the article are taken from: Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition. (2006). New York, NY: Oxford University Press

potencjalnych pułapek nadmiernego samopoświęcenia, prowadzącego nieraz do samozaniedbania czy wypalenia. W dążeniu do priorytetyzowania potrzeb innych, osoby mogą nieumyślnie sabotować własny dobrostan i zaburzać zdrowie swoich relacji. Ta subtelna sztuka wymaga głębokiego zrozumienia własnych potrzeb, granic i motywacji, jak również gotowości do kwestionowania zakorzenionych przekonań oraz narosłych oczekiwań społecznych. Obejmuje to poszerzenie samoświadomości, samowspółczucia i asertywności, jak również stosowanie jasnej komunikacji i wzajemnego szacunku w ramach relacji. Choć podróż w kierunku znalezienia tej równowagi może być nie lada wyzwaniem, może być zarazem głęboko satysfakcjonująca, ponieważ oferuje możliwość osobistego wzrostu, emocjonalnego spełnienia i bardziej autentycznego połączenia z innymi ludźmi. Uwalniając się od schematu samopoświęcenia klient może zyskać zdrową równowagę między daniem, a braniem. Co za tym idzie, nauczyć się traktować własne potrzeby jako tak samo ważne jak potrzeby innych.

## **B. Kochaj bliźniego jak siebie samego**

Jako terapeuci i psycholodzy, naszą rolą jest umocnienie klientów w priorytetyzowaniu ich dobrostanu przy jednoczesnym pielęgnowaniu zdrowych relacji, które dają poczucie spełnienia, a nie wypalenia. To umocnienie rozpoczyna się od uznania jako ważnych doświadczeń i emocji klientów, pomagając im zarazem rozpoznać wpływ nadmiernego samopoświęcenia na ich życie i relacje. Poprzez terapeutyczną eksplorację oraz refleksję, klienci mogą zdobyć wgląd w podstawowe przekonania i motywacje napędzające ich samozaniedbanie, torując drogę do znaczącej zmiany i do wzrostu. Wspieramy klientów w odkrywaniu i stosowaniu samowspółczucia oraz praktyk dbania o siebie, kierując ich ku działaniom i zachowaniom, które prowadzą ich umysł, ciało i ducha do wzrostu. Dodatkowo, pracujemy z klientami nad poszerzeniem umiejętności asertywności, umożliwiając im skuteczną komunikację ich potrzeb i granic w ramach relacji. Poprzez tworzenie bez-

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piecznego, wspierającego środowiska terapeutycznego, zapewniamy klientom narzędzia, zasoby oraz zachętę, których potrzebują do rozeznawania złożoności samopoświęcenia i dbania o siebie, ostatecznie pomagając im rozwijać relacje międzyludzkie oparte na filarach autentyczności, wzajemnego szacunku, ale i na dobrostanie emocjonalnym dwóch stron. W końcu nie przez przypadek jedno z najważniejszych przykazań ustanowionych przez Jezusa brzmi - „Kochaj bliźniego jak siebie samego”. Wyjaśnia bowiem samo w sobie potrzebę równowagi w kwestii miłowania, bo jak można kochać kogoś nie kochając siebie? Dopiero wtedy kiedy umiemy zadbać o siebie, a następnie o innych możemy mówić o dojrzałej formie miłości. Bo gdy już u danej osoby dojdzie do wypalenia to „z pustego i Salomon nie naleje”, dlatego tak ważnym będzie pomoc klientom we wdrożeniu praktyk samowspółczucia i samoopieki w każdym okresie ich życia.



**Behold, your King comes to you, a righteous and a helper.**



**Lorena Diez  
Canseco Briceño  
(Peru)**

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## Comment to

### „Finding the Balance Between Self-Sacrifice and Self-Care in Relationships to Maintain Healthy Love Dynamics“

In a very clear way, the article presents to us the importance that it has for the well-being of a person and for the progress of a healthy and balanced romantic relationship, the fact of knowing how to find the right balance between self-sacrifice and self-care, meaning the right balance between the effort that someone can and must make while looking forward the well-being of the other person, and the effort that is also necessary and important to carry out for the own well-being.

The route taken in the article seems extremely interesting to me, since it stands out how, from a Christian view of the world, people can mistakenly consider self-sacrifice as a positive behaviour that can lead them to happiness in a romantic relationship with another human being. From this lecture, we can conclude that the attitude of service and the act of looking forward the other's person welfare, is not negative, but rather, meaning that if this implies the neglect of own desires and needs and the deterioration of the own identity, in the long run it ends up being an extremely negative fac-

tor for people's deployment and also for the establishment of a solid relationship based on a reciprocal and true love that promotes the well-being of both persons. Taking as a starting point the achievement of the before mentioned optimal balance between self-sacrifice and self-care, we understand that it is not about one of these two taking precedence over the other, but rather, that it is important to help people to achieve a balance between both concepts and therefore finding different ways of carrying out a relationship.

From a psychotherapeutic perspective, the article seeks – firstly – to know the causes that explain the behaviour of people who put their own interests ahead of those of others. Although from a Christian view of the world, these people are considered altruistic and therefore with a personal maturity level that leads them to serve and seek the good of others; it is also known that this extreme service attitude with others that puts the own needs at risk, from a psychological approach, implies a series of shortcomings, for example: the pressure experienced to satisfy people's expectations to

maintain harmony in interrelationships, the low self-esteem behind these avoided conflict behaviours, among other aspects that may be due to different factors such as education, past experiences and expectations of society that values these behaviours positively.

The article clearly explains the negative consequences for the person and for an affective relationship that this type of postponement of oneself brings, and I personally consider this to be utmost importance and necessity, and is one of the great contributions in the article, since by taking into account these negative consequences, it can be understood that the self-sacrifice has been misunderstood and therefore put into practice in a wrong way, which has led to dependent and unhealthy relationships, which generates negative emotional relationships, where abuse and submission become aspects that harms the people involved, both the couple and the rest of the family, like children who can imitate certain patterns of behaviour and internalize them, creating a behavioural pattern that can be rooted through time.

Considering the negative consequences that the misunderstood self-sacrifice brings to the life of a person and to society, is that psychological intervention is extremely necessary to help the person achieve an authentic self-knowledge, so that from this recognition the person would be able to establish limits in relationships, which will allow a certain autonomy and care for the own identity. At this point, psychotherapy helps a lot, since it is considered an art: the way of approaching others, maintaining affective relationships that will become healthy and beneficial for personal development; and since many times people cannot achieve said objectives with their own tools.

In that way, the author of the Article Patrycja Ewa Longawa, presents different therapeutic points of view, and intervention schemes that can be of great help while trying to achieve this goal; however, the effectiveness of the help

provided goes beyond the approaches and schemes; since it involves working on changing the way of thinking and understanding reality for the person as it is and empathizing with the reality of other people, so after that, voluntarily, the person will be able to make specific changes on how to relate with others; in that way I consider that the psychotherapist becomes vitally important, as they have to be able to create an atmosphere of trust with the patient. So that the patient could change the own mental schemes and internalize the benefits that his internal changes, attitude and behaviour will bring to his life – not only for himself, but also for those who surround him. This even includes the change of paradigms and beliefs as positive as the understanding of the life of service to others that the Christian life implies; the therapist must know how to identify and propose certain changes; without leading to the reduction of beliefs of this type, but rather, being able to help the person to internalize the true meaning of service and attention to others, where phrases as “love thy neighbour as thyself” shows us the true meaning of self-sacrifice and self-care, and also the importance of reaching a balance between both. Another important aspect to consider is that “no one gives what they do not have”, therefore self-care and the search for personal development are crucial before seeking to serve others.

I personally congratulate Patrycja Ewa Longawa for writing such and interesting and important article, which presents us a topic that involves improving the love relationships between two people who, by creating a harmonious and balanced family, will contribute positively to the good development of society, furthermore by considering the topic of self-sacrifice and self-care from a Christian and psychological perspective, it gives us a significant contribution for the integration between psychology and Christianity, which I consider very necessary nowadays.





**The Table**



**Werner May  
(Germany)**

Werner May (Germany) was the senior chairman of the IGNIS Institute for Christian Psychology in Kitzingen for more than 25 years ([www.ignis.de](http://www.ignis.de)). As a teacher his main interest was in basic questions of Christian Psychology and in counseling of foster families. He also helped to build up the Institute for Christian Psychology, Education and Therapy in Switzerland ([www.icp.ch](http://www.icp.ch)). Now he is the chairman of the European Movement for Christian Anthropology, Psychology and Therapy ([www.emcapp.eu](http://www.emcapp.eu)) and publishes the free e-journal Christian Psychology Around The World (<https://emcapp.ignis.de/>). Werner has been married to Agnes for now 50 years. They live in Würzburg, Germany, and have six adult children.

Werner May (Deutschland) war über 25 Jahre lang Vorsitzender der IGNIS-Akademie für christliche Psychologie in Kitzingen ([www.ignis.de](http://www.ignis.de)). Als Dozent engagierte er sich vor allem für grundlegende Fragen der christlichen Psychologie und sein praktisches Standbein war die Beratung von Pflege- und Adoptivfamilien. Er baute auch die Höheren Fachschule für Sozialpädagogik in der Schweiz ([www.icp.ch](http://www.icp.ch)) mit auf. Heute ist er Vorsitzender der Europäischen Bewegung für christliche Anthropologie, Psychologie und Therapie ([www.emcapp.eu](http://www.emcapp.eu)) und gibt das kostenlose E-Journal „Christian Psychology Around The World“ heraus (<https://emcapp.ignis.de/>). Werner ist seit 50 Jahren mit Agnes verheiratet. Sie leben in Würzburg, Deutschland, und haben sechs erwachsene Kinder.

**Former articles by Werner available here:**

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/20/#p=71>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/19/#p=56>

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<https://emcapp.ignis.de/12/#p=29>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/2/>

## **Lessons: Learning “Togetherness in Love”**

## **Module für den eigenen Liebe-Lernprozess**

I have to admit that the first 20 years of my life I learnt very little about communication, building relationships, fellowship with others and loving my neighbour. Neither in school nor in my family did I receive any preparation for social interaction with and for one another and had to learn all this in the school of life, later through counselling and then in interaction in fellowship. In principle, I am still in the middle of this learning process decades later. Four lessons stand out for me in particular.

Über Kommunikation, Beziehungsgestaltung, Gemeinschaft mit anderen und Nächstenliebe, so muss ich zugeben, habe ich in den ersten 20 Jahren meines Lebens wenig gelernt. Weder in der Schule noch in meiner Familie wurde ich auf das soziale Mit- und Füreinander vorbereitet und musste mir das alles in der Schule des Lebens, später durch Seelsorge und dann im geschwisterlichen Miteinander aneignen. Im Prinzip bin ich in diesem Lernprozess auch nach Jahrzehnten noch mittendrin. Vier Lektionen stehen mir besonders vor Augen.

- What is said is not what is meant
- "It" or "You"?
- Answering the face
- Love needs the third party

### **What is said is not what is meant**

First of all, it was important to understand and learn to implement the basics of all communication as they are taken for granted in social professions today: What comes across to me in a conversation is not necessarily what the other person really meant, and vice versa. In most cases, I hear more than what the other person says.

It is therefore important to learn to listen, ask questions and not take it for granted that you understand each other. Putting up with different opinions and tackling conflicts productively are also part of these basics.

I've been chewing on this lesson for over 40 years now.

### **"It" or "You"?**

In the 1980s, I came across the dialogical principle of Martin Buber (1878 - 1965).

A new, lifelong lesson began.

Every relationship creates its own ego: I can treat the other as an id, as an object, or as a counterpart, as a you.

Depending on this, I will then experience myself as another: There is the I of the I-It and the I of the I-Thou, as Buber puts it.

Is it up to me whether I say You or It?

At least I can prepare for it by learning to refrain from treating the other according to the (over-)hastily formed images I have of them. Instead, I start slowly and carefully, with respect, to discover the other person bit by bit.

And there is another thing I can contribute: I can dispense with appearances, with the need to present any images of myself.

Doing without images and appearances creates space for the "I-Thou". That sounds easier than it actually is, but each of these encounters allows love to come alive and grow.

### **Answering the face**

At the end of the 1990s, my attention was drawn to the French philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas (1906 - 1995), who was likewise Jewish. A third lesson began.

- Das Gesagte ist nicht das Gemeinte
- Es oder Du?
- Dem Antlitz antworten
- Liebe braucht den Dritten

### **Das Gesagte ist nicht das Gemeinte**

Zunächst einmal galt es, die Basics jeglicher Kommunikation zu verstehen und umsetzen zu lernen, wie sie heute in sozialen Berufen selbstverständlich sind: Das, was bei mir in einem Gespräch ankommt, muss nicht das sein, was der andere wirklich gemeint hat, und umgekehrt. Meistens kommt mehr bei mir an, als in den Worten des anderen steckt.

Es gilt also, zuhören zu lernen, Rückfragen zu stellen und nicht selbstverständlich davon auszugehen, dass man sich versteht. Unterschiedliche Meinungen auszuhalten und Konflikte produktiv anzupacken, gehören ebenfalls zu diesen Basics.

An dieser Lektion knabbere ich jetzt seit über 40 Jahren.

### **Es oder Du?**

In den 1980er Jahren stieß ich auf das dialogische Prinzip von Martin Buber (1878 – 1965).

Eine neue, lebenslange Lektion begann.

Jede Beziehung schafft ihr eigenes Ich: Ich kann den anderen als ein Es behandeln, als ein Objekt, oder als ein Gegenüber, als ein Du.

Je nachdem, werde ich mich selbst dann als einen anderen erfahren: Es gibt das Ich des Ich-Es und das Ich des Ich-Du, wie Buber es sagt.

Liegt es in meiner Hand, ob ich Du oder Es spreche?

Zumindest kann ich es vorbereiten, indem ich lerne, darauf zu verzichten, den anderen gemäß der (vor)schnellen Bilder zu behandeln, die ich von ihm habe. Stattdessen beginne ich, langsam und behutsam, mit Achtung, den anderen Stück für Stück zu entdecken.

Und noch ein weiteres kann ich beitragen: Ich kann auf Scheinen verzichten, darauf, von mir selbst irgendwelche Bilder präsentieren zu müssen.

Der Verzicht auf Bilder und auf Scheinen schafft den Raum für das Ich-Du. Das hört sich leichter an, als es getan ist, doch jede dieser Begegnungen lässt Liebe lebendig werden und wachsen.

Lévinas speaks of the face, of the nakedness that the other usually helplessly shows me in times of need. In principle, there are two cries from the heart: "Thou shalt not kill me!" and "Thou shalt not leave me alone in my death!"

Hearing these cries, responding to them, getting involved, sacrificing myself, creates a new self, an ethical identity (according to Lévinas): Someone is calling me. Only I can answer.

While in the second lesson I was and am learning to open myself up to encounters, not protecting myself, making myself vulnerable, in this third lesson I also have to put my ego aside. That sounds radical: the fear of hurting takes the place of the fear of being hurt!

As a Christian, I am no stranger to this idea. Jesus himself says that we should lose our lives for his sake and for the sake of our neighbour, only then can we gain our own. And Jesus himself repeatedly assures us that we are loved, which we need as support in order to be able to love at all.

### **Love needs the third party**

For about 15 years now, I have been privileged to discover a fourth lesson: perfect love needs a third party!

This is the provocative thesis of the Christian religious philosopher Jörg Splett (1936). Two alone are not enough; love is only perfect when each person loves the people the other loves and helps their neighbour to love these third parties. Marital love that includes children would be an example of this love.

However, Splett is first and foremost concerned with the other person's relationship with God: I ask God for my neighbour and I help him or her in his or her relationship with God and he or she strives to do the same for me. This creates the triad of love.

Splett refers to words by Richard of St Victor (12th century): "When one person gives love to another, when a lonely person loves a lonely person, then love is present, but co-love is missing. When two people love each other, give their hearts to each other with great longing and the stream of love flows from this one to that one, from that one to this one, and is directed in opposite directions towards different

### **Dem Antlitz antworten**

Ende der 1990er Jahre wurde ich dann auf den ebenfalls jüdischen Philosophen Emmanuel Lévinas (1906 – 1995) aus Frankreich aufmerksam gemacht. Eine dritte Lektion begann.

Lévinas spricht vom Antlitz, von der Nacktheit, die der andere mir in der Not meist unbeholfen zeigt. Im Prinzip sind es zwei Herzensschreie: „Du sollst mich nicht töten!“ und „Du sollst mich in meinem Sterben nicht alleine lassen!“

Diese Schreie zu hören, darauf zu antworten, mich einzulassen, mich aufzugeben, schafft ein neues Ich, eine ethische Identität (so Lévinas): Jemand ruft mich. Nur ich kann antworten.

War und bin ich in der zweiten Lektion dabei, zu lernen, mich für Begegnungen zu öffnen, mich nicht zu schützen, mich verletzlich zu machen, so gilt es in dieser dritten Lektion zusätzlich, mein Ich zurückzustellen.

Das klingt radikal: Die Angst, zu verletzen, tritt an die Stelle der Angst, verletzt zu werden!

Als Christ ist mir dieser Gedanke nicht fremd. Jesus selbst sagt, dass wir unser Leben um seinen willen und um des Nächsten willen verlieren sollen, nur dann können wir das eigene gewinnen. Und Jesus selbst spricht uns das Geliebt-Sein immer wieder zu, das wir als Halt brauchen, um überhaupt so lieben zu können.

### **Liebe braucht den Dritten**

Seit etwa 15 Jahren darf ich eine vierte Lektion entdecken: Vollkommene Liebe braucht den Dritten!

Das ist die provokative These des christlichen Religionsphilosophen Jörg Splett (1936). Zwei alleine genügen sich nicht, Liebe vollendet sich erst dann, wenn jeder die Menschen mitliebt, die der andere liebt, und seinem Nächsten hilft, diese Dritten zu lieben. Eheliche Liebe, die Kinder einbezieht, wäre ein Beispiel für diese Liebe.

Splett geht es aber zunächst um die Gottesbeziehung des anderen: Ich bitte Gott für mein Gegenüber und ich helfe ihm in seiner Gottesbeziehung und er oder sie strebt das gleiche für mich an. So entsteht der Dreiklang der Liebe.

Splett bezieht sich dabei auf Richard von St. Viktor (12.Jh.) der schreibt: „Wenn einer einem anderen Liebe schenkt, wenn ein Einsamer ei-



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things, then there is love on both sides, but there is no co-love. We can only speak of co-love when two people love a third person in unison, embrace them lovingly in togetherness, and the inclination of the two converges in the flame of love for the third person without distinction."

Richard of St Victor, in turn, develops this approach from his doctrine of the Trinity: God is in himself this triad of love, into which he wants to incorporate us as his children. To put it in his own radical words: a "single God" alone cannot be love, nor can a twofold God be love, only a triune God is love, perfect love.

Back to my lessons of togetherness.

I am beginning to realise that the love for God, the love for my brothers and sisters, the love for my neighbour and the love for strangers and opponents is not based solely on the experience of God's love for me in Jesus Christ.

Even if this love of God is the most wonderful offer of all time, it also includes all these human lessons: taking an interest in others, not encountering them with prejudices, learning to listen, becoming capable of criticism, not protecting oneself with one's self-images, allowing the other person's need to come to one's attention, practising gentleness in our dealings with one another and working for the life of the other person, including their relationships with God and other people. In other words, without all these lessons, lasting love of one's neighbour is not possible.

All of these are building blocks of neighbourly love, supported by God's love for me, which also stands by me when I stumble again and again in this learning process and never reach my goal.

What will the fifth lesson be?

### **And in marriage?**

In addition to the four lessons already mentioned, marital love also passes through various phases needed to keep the fire of love burning. I call these the mirror phase, the puzzle phase, and the mystery phase.

nen Einsamen liebt, dann ist zwar Liebe vorhanden, aber die Mitliebe fehlt. Wenn zwei sich gegenseitig gern haben, einander ihr Herz in hohem Sehnen schenken und der Liebesstrom von diesem zu jenem, von jenem zu diesem fließt und gegenläufig je auf Verschiedenes zielt, dann ist zwar auf beiden Seiten Liebe da, aber die Mitliebe fehlt. Von Mitliebe kann erst dann gesprochen werden, wo von zweien ein dritter einträchtig geliebt, in Gemeinsamkeit liebend umfassen wird und die Neigung der beiden in der Flamme der Liebe zum Dritten ununterschieden zusammenschlägt."

Richard von St. Viktor wiederum entfaltet diesen Denkansatz aus seiner Trinitätslehre: Gott ist in sich dieser Dreiklang der Liebe, in die er uns als seine Kinder mit hineinnehmen möchte. Um es in eigenen Worten radikal auszudrücken: Ein „Ein-Gott“ alleine kann nicht Liebe sein, auch ein zweifacher Gott kann nicht Liebe sein, nur ein dreieiniger Gott ist die Liebe, die vollkommene Liebe.

Zurück zu meinen Lektionen des Miteinanders. Ich beginne zu begreifen, dass sich die Agapeliere Gottes, die Liebe zu den Geschwistern, die Liebe zum Nächsten sowie die Liebe zum Fremden und zum Gegner nicht nur aus der Erfahrung der Liebe Gottes zu mir in Jesus Christus speist.

Auch wenn diese Liebe Gottes das großartigste Angebot aller Zeiten darstellt, gehören auch all diese menschlichen Lektionen dazu: sich für den anderen interessieren, ihm nicht mit Vorurteilen begegnen, zuhören lernen, kritikfähig werden, sich selbst nicht durch eigene Bilder schützen, die Not des anderen an sich herantreten lassen, Behutsamkeit im Miteinander praktizieren und sich für das Leben des anderen einsetzen, einschließlich seiner Beziehungen zu Gott und anderen Menschen. Mit anderen Worten: Ohne all diese Lektionen ist auch eine dauerhafte Nächstenliebe nicht möglich. All das sind Bausteine der Nächstenliebe, getragen von der Liebe Gottes zu mir, die auch zu mir hält, wenn ich in diesem Lernprozess immer wieder strauchle und nie am Ziel ankomme. Was wird die fünfte Lektion sein?

### **Mirror phase**

I see a perfect partner who has no weaknesses, no flaws, probably because I don't want to admit my own weaknesses.

This naivety, this looking through rose-tinted spectacles, is something we are allowed at the beginning of a relationship in the first few years, remnants of which can even last a lifetime.

But it can't just stay rose-tinted in the long term. That is being in love without love. We would harm ourselves, get lost.

In the mirror stage, I overestimate what I like in others, what I perhaps can't be myself but would like to be. What I dislike about myself or what I struggle with myself will eventually bother me about the other person. Jesus thematises and deepens this projection in his words about the splinter and beam (Mt 7:3). My dreams of love are also transfigured.

So at this stage, I am always pointed back to myself: What does this positive or this negative side of the other look like in me?

If I face this question productively, then the mirror loses its function and I can look through it and perceive the other person in a new way.

### **Puzzle phase**

As the years pass, I may suddenly recognise aspects of others that become a mystery to me because they are strange or different, even unique.

Mysteries are experiences with others that raise questions in me.

When I want to understand the other person, what they mean, why they do or want something, in other words when I start to ask questions and listen, an exciting phase in our relationship begins: I can discover myself as a complement, no longer as a benchmark, and the other person becomes an enrichment.

The differences between morning and evening grumpiness, where each of us likes to go on holiday, how we tidy a room, what we like, what we are afraid of or not, what we want sexually, how much money we think we need and much more becomes valuable.

And this adventure of discovering each other will last a lifetime!

### **Und in der Ehe?**

Die eheliche Liebe durchläuft zusätzlich zu den bisher beschriebenen vier Lektionen verschiedene Stadien, damit das Liebesfeuer am Brennen bleibt. Ich nenne sie Spiegelstadium, Rätselstadium und Geheimnisstadium.

#### **„Spiegelphase:**

Ich sehe einen perfekten Partner, der keine Schwäche, keinen Makel besitzt, wahrscheinlich, weil ich mir meine eigenen Schwächen auch nicht zugestehen will.

Diese Blauäugigkeit, dieser Blick durch die rosa-rote Brille sei uns am Anfang einer Beziehung in den ersten Jahre gegönnt, Überreste davon sogar ein Leben lang.

Aber nur rosarot kann es auf Dauer nicht bleiben. Das ist ein Verliebtsein ohne Liebe. Wir würden uns schaden, uns verrennen.

Im Spiegelstadium überschätze ich das, was mir am anderen gefällt, was ich vielleicht selbst nicht sein kann, aber sein möchte. Was ich an mir selbst ablehne oder womit ich selbst zu kämpfen habe, wird mich mit der Zeit am anderen stören. Diese Projektion thematisiert und vertieft Jesus in seinem Splitter-Balken-Wort (Mt 7,3). Auch meine Träume von Liebe verklären.

Ich werde also in diesem Stadium immer wieder auf mich selbst zurückverwiesen: Wie schaut diese positive oder diese negative Seite des anderen bei mir selbst aus?

Wenn ich mich dieser Frage produktiv stelle, dann verliert der Spiegel seine Funktion, und ich schaue dann hindurch und erkenne den anderen neu.

#### **Rätselstadium**

Mit den Jahren kann ich plötzlich Seiten am anderen wahrnehmen, die mir zum Rätsel werden, weil sie fremd oder andersartig, ja einzigartig sind.

Rätsel sind Erlebnisse mit dem anderen, die in mir Fragen aufwerfen.

Wenn ich den anderen verstehen will, wie er etwas meint, warum er etwas tut oder will, also anfangs, nachzufragen und zuzuhören, beginnt ein spannender Abschnitt in unserer Beziehung: Ich selbst kann mich als Ergänzung entde-

## **And the mystery phase**

The closer we get to each other, which takes time, i.e. years, the more the other person becomes a mystery, a mystery of their own uniqueness, of their likeness to God, which is just as much a mystery to them because, after all, we are not fixed, but in a process of becoming, of growing older, in changing environments.

Our relationships with each other and with God change and we also remain limited and fragmented in our self-perception.

I realise that the other person is not only meant for me and myself, not only for our love: every person is a gift to this concrete world.

Perhaps the other person's laughter is unique. Or do they sometimes find wise, empathetic words that take the oppressiveness out of the serious?

When we approach each other in this loving way, we enter a vibrant, sparkling space of love, full of surprises for our marriage.

Unlike a riddle, a mystery has no solution, but leads from surprise to surprise. The other becomes an adventure of discovery.

And that doesn't apply only to marriage.

Lessons: learning "togetherness in love" – such is the title I gave this contribution. These are valuable steps in our pursuit of love, in our efforts for the sake of love, in our longing for love, for without love everything is worthless, with love little becomes much.

"If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have life, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing." (1 Cor. 13:1-3)

cken, nicht mehr als Maßstab, und den andere wird eine Bereicherung.

Die Unterschiede, ob Morgen- oder Abendmuffel, wohin jeder gerne in den Urlaub fährt, wie wir ein Zimmer aufräumen, was uns schmeckt, wovon wir Angst haben oder nicht, was wir uns sexuell wünschen, wie viel Geld wir meinen zu brauchen und vieles mehr, bekommt Wert.

Und dieses Abenteuer, den anderen zu entdecken, wird lebenslang anhalten!

## **Und das Geheimnisstadium**

Je näher wir uns kommen, das braucht Zeit, sprich Jahre, umso mehr wird der andere zu einem Geheimnis, Mysterium, zum Geheimnis seiner Einzigartigkeit, seiner Gottebenbildlichkeit, was ihm selbst auch genauso Geheimnis ist, denn wir sind ja nichts Festgelegtes, sondern im Werden, im Älterwerden, mit wechselnden Umwelten.

Unsere Beziehungen zueinander und zu Gott verändern sich und auch in unserer Selbstwahrnehmung bleiben wir begrenzt, ausschnitthaft.

Ich merke, der andere ist nicht nur für mich und sich gedacht, nicht nur für unsere Liebe: Jeder Mensch ist ein Geschenk an diese konkrete Welt.

Vielleicht ist das Lachen des anderen einzigartig. Oder manchmal findet er weise, einfühlsame Worte, die dem Ernsten das Bedrückende nehmen?

Wenn wir uns so liebend näherkommen, betreten wir im Miteinander einen knisternden, funkelnden Liebes-Raum, voller Überraschungen für unsere Ehe.

Das Geheimnis kennt im Gegensatz zum Rätsel keine Lösung, sondern führt von Überraschung zu Überraschung. Der andere wird zum Entdeckungsabenteuer.

Und das gilt nicht nur so in der Ehe.

Lektionen, „Miteinander in Liebe“ lernen, habe ich diesen Beitrag genannt. Diese sind wertvolle Schritte in unserem Streben nach Liebe, am sich Mühen ums Lieben, am Sehnen nach der Liebe, denn ohne Liebe ist alles nichts, mit Liebe ist wenig viel.





**Bridge to Light II**

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”Wenn ich mit Menschen- und Engelzungen redete und hätte die Liebe nicht, so wäre ich ein tönendes Erz oder eine klingende Schelle.

Und wenn ich prophetisch reden könnte und wüsste alle Geheimnisse und alle Erkenntnis und hätte allen Glauben, so dass ich Berge versetzen könnte, und hätte die Liebe nicht, so wäre ich nichts.

Und wenn ich alle meine Habe den Armen gäbe und ließe meinen Leib verbrennen, und hätte die Liebe nicht, so wäre mir`s nichts nütze.”(1.Kor 13,1-3)

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## The journey continues with “Togetherness in Love”

In reflecting on Werner's piece, I find that I resonate with his journey of intricate discovery. Human beings are often an enigma and communication between them is typically complex. The Psalmist, thanks God for making him so 'wonderfully complex'. (1) Sometimes, I am not that thankful for this intense complexity. You can sense a similar 'bafflement' in Shakespeare's words in Hamlet, "What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! ... And yet, to me what is this quintessence of dust? (2) Borrowing Churchill's words about the former USSR, we humans seem to be a "contradiction wrapped up in an enigma", especially when it comes to communication with each other.

### **Becoming more fully Self-Aware.**

The Johari Window (3) is helpful here, in that it can help us in terms our self-awareness of just how transparent we are with others. There are parts of ourselves that are 'unknown unknowns', (4) we simply don't reveal them to

others because we aren't consciously aware of them. And there are parts of ourselves, our inner lives, our 'shadow selves' (5) that we hold back from interpersonal communication. We employ what German speakers call Maskenfreiheit (6), the "safety of the mask". Apparently, the American author John Updike used this technique. He hid behind the words of his writing. Updike grew up extremely self-conscious about the 'acne scars' left on his face from teenage years. He found safety in sheltering from public scrutiny by projecting his desired self through his novels.

Having grown up in strict evangelical churches, I too have practiced Maskenfreiheit. I have hidden behind 'orthodox' words, and outwardly conformed to the 'expected norms' of conservative Protestantism. I have been a hypocrite in the Greek sense of a 'play actor'. I have worn the mask that covers up my true thoughts and feelings, unwilling to be transparent or vulnerable because of the fear of being judged, shamed and rejected. I have not believed that church is a Psychologically Safe Organization,

(7) a community where I could truly be myself. This has caused me to be a conflicted believer. Afraid to come out into the open space of complete honesty. Psychologically agoraphobic, I think. But I have ventured out into more overt honesty over the various stages of my maturation.

Richard Rohr has written about these 'Stages in Life'. He talks about the stage where we create our ego, and the stage where we begin to 'un-create' our ego. Rohr writes:

Creation of the ego is a necessary creativity. However, it is also about the creation of a separation. It's taking myself as central! We probably need to do this until we reach middle age (which, at 67 I have passed) (8). But then we need to allow what we've created to be uncreated. Maybe I was a great footballer but that's gone now. Maybe I was good looking, but that's gone now too. When we can say "yes" to that uncreation and still be happy, we've done our work. My true self is in God and not what I've created. My self-created self isn't really me (9).

Rohr calls this uncreating, "coming home to myself." It means being all 'at home' with all God really created me to be. And I think all God wants me to be is who I really am. (10)

I am just now able to start 'being me' me in terms of communication. Recognizing that I am of intrinsic value rather than instrumental value. And so I now can begin to communicate with less fear and greater confidence.

### **Martin Buber (1887 -1965) 'I-Thou'**

It was ironic that Werner mentions the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber (11). I was recently teaching a MA module in Ethics and Buber's 'I-Thou' approach gave us considerable help in having ethical traction. His work on 'I-thou' rather than 'I-it' relationships is an extended meditation on what it means to treat others as another self who is worthy of love and respect. Our use of language - the way we situate ourselves in the world - the way we consider others as 'I' 'Thou' or 'I' 'It'. Buber's foundational thinking is that we 'always find ourselves in relation'. "The world is two-fold for a person in

accordance with their two-fold attitude." (12) That is: there are two basic ways of being in the world:

1. A way that participates, encounters and acts as a subject.
2. A way that detaches, experiences and objectifies the world.

### **The 'I-Thou' relationship:**

The first relationship is the 'I-Thou' relationship. It is only by participating in the lives of one another that people mature morally. (NB: Ubuntu is an ancient African word meaning 'humanity to others'. It is often described as reminding us that 'I am what I am because of who we all are'. We cannot be truly human, fully moral, in isolation). Buber notes that we don't relate to people as a 'loose bundle of qualities'. We stand in relation to other persons, not other objects.

### **The 'I-It' relationship:**

In this approach to communication, ironically the subject is truly alone. They see others as objects to be experienced and manipulated. (13) The 'Self' is detached from others, it refuses participation in the lives of others. This lack of connectivity results in the barrenness of moral solipsism - a world that has just one self-contained individual (Me, Myself and I). Other people are reduced simply to an object of one's experience without having one's own individuality as the subject of one's own experience. The other person 'it' becomes a thing, a commodity!

Buber believes that we can also apply these two kinds of relationships to our interaction with God. Here, God can be categorized in human terms. God can related to as an 'alien' i.e. the God of the Philosophers and Deism. This is not a relationship at all, the relationship and communication is depersonalized and God is commodified. There is no genuine two way participation. Buber suggest, "By its very nature.... 'The eternal You' cannot 'become the eternal it'." God cannot be grasped as a sum of qualities. God and the individual relationship to God cannot be reduced to mere linguistic categories." (14) In God, a person encounters God without the mediation of language and its labels.

Here Buber sounds similar to Kierkegaard and his emphasis on the encounter with the divine.

### **Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas**

Buber is reminding us that true communication is always between people not objects. Between people of intrinsic worth. As Werner notes in his reference to Emmanuel Levinas, and as Buber would surely have agreed, others are encountered facially and in the revelation of their need to be 'seen', 'voiced' and given loving compassion.

### **Whole Body Language – putting in the effort needed**

If the face is a portal to the soul, it is vital that we learn nonverbal communication. Otherwise we will be denying ourselves important communication subtexts. And there is a danger of emotional lethargy here.

In the 1980s Fiske and Taylor (15) were looking for ways to describe what research was showing to be a 'ubiquitous tendency' among humans to think only as much as they feel they needed to, and no more. And so the metaphor of 'cognitive miser' was born. It seems that we tend to sit on reserves of mental energy and processing capacity, unwilling to spend much of it unless we really have to. Sadly, we are not prepared to put in the emotional effort. We prefer to think fast and shallow rather than slow and with more depth. (16) Fiske and Taylor continue to show that human thought, like every other complex process, is subject to the 'speed versus accuracy' trade off. Go fast and make mistakes, be thorough and diligent and you take an eternity. So according to Fiske and Taylor we are 'motivated tacticians' when it comes to interpersonal communications, strategically choosing ease and speed, or effort and accuracy, depending on our motivation. Most of the time, just the "gist" will do, so we choose speed. 'Cognitive misers' tend to favor shortcut tools such as assumptions and heuristics. We favor going for the Reader's Digest version of the person and settle for a 'first impressions' evaluation of other people. However, as Paul Tieger notes, "speed reading people" is not advisable (17).

As humans we think that we are really proficient at reading other people. The truth is, we are not. (18) Halvorson notes that, "much of this process of perceiving other people isn't even rational. It is biased, incomplete and inflexible. It is also largely (but not entirely) automatic." (19) The first thing is to understand how little we actually pay attention, and how much we rely on assumptions.

The first assumption to be faced down is that we tend to believe the universal myth that 90% of communication is nonverbal. This is not the case as Albert Mehrabain (20) has shown. A researcher in body language, Mehrabain was the first to break down the components of face to face conversation. He found that communication is 55% nonverbal, 38% vocal, and 7% words only. (21) It is now commonly thought that nonverbal communication preceded verbal communication in terms of human evolution. We also tend to 'mirror' each other:

A growing body of evidence suggests that language evolved from manual gestures, gradually incorporating motor acts with vocal elements. In this evolutionary context, the human mirror mechanism (MM) would permit the passage from "doing something" to "communicating it to someone else." This evolutionary process is called the "gestural origin of Language." (22)

Another person's facial 'micro movements' are picked up on almost an unconscious level. However, Sam Horn says it is especially important that we watch people's eyebrows to know what they are really thinking. (23) But we now think much more holistically in terms of using the whole of our physicality when it comes to interpersonal communication. I think it's about realizing that I am trying to bring all I am to an interface with all you are, when it comes to communication. No easy feat!

Dr. Jeff Thompson believes that we can better understand the complexity of nonverbal communication by remembering what he calls the 3 Cs. (24)

- **Congruence** – comparing spoken words to body language and tone
- **Context** – better understanding of the setting.
- **Clusters** – using not one but multiple expressions or movements to influence our interpretation of a person’s body language. (25)

I sense I am adding to the complexity of interpersonal communication, rather than simplifying it. One could be feeling quite negative and pessimistic about the whole enterprise. But the reality is closer to intuitive common sense when we get down to it. The fact is that some folks are easier to communicate with than others. And there is a plasticity about our brains to be better communicators. No one is entirely unknowable.(26) There are those who express themselves in ways that allow others to perceive them more accurately. Halvorson refers to this as “judgeable” or as personality expert David Funder calls it, being a “good target”. Personally, I’m not a fan of either term, but I get their point.

To be more ‘readable’ or as Halvorson and Funder put it “judgeable”, four things need to happen. The target must:

1. Make the information available
2. Make sure that the information is relevant.

Then the perceiver must:

3. Detect, or pay attention to that information and
4. Use it correctly.

Halvorson makes an important caveat here that, if we hide information about ourselves, the danger is that, people will fill in the blanks, imagining a whole personality profile for you that may or may not be accurate. More sinister still, manipulative people can use this dynamic to their own advantage. (27)

### Learning the Art

There is a veritable mountain of literature on how to improve our communication skills. Here I will only touch on what I consider to be the

most valuable. Firstly, slowing down to connect. This image is taken from space travel. The shuttle has to slow down to connect and ‘dock’ with the space lab. We tend to live in a ‘hurry sick’ society where patience is at a premium. To really understand what another person is trying to communicate, we have to ‘listen more slowly’. It takes time ‘to enter the long black branches of other people’s lives’, as Mary Oliver puts it. (28)

We have to practice ‘attentive listening’. We have to give folks space and time to tell us exactly what they want to say. The most important issues are not usually blurted out in the first few words. We also need to practice ‘Selah’ moments. Selah is used by the editor/compiler(s) of the Psalms to instruct the congregation to pause at that point in the Psalm to take in the significance of what is being sung. Sometimes silence is more important than words – listening to what is not being said – perceiving the emotional atmosphere that is present. “I have often regretted my speech, but never my silence”, as an ancient writer has it. (29) Thomas Merton undergirds this need of quietness as part of the art of communication when he writes, “It is in deep...silence that I find the gentleness with which I can truly love my brother and sister”. Norris expands on this, speaking of “an unfathomable silence that has the power to reform...” (30) So love and gentleness are both the motivation and approach to true communication. In all circumstances we must not have ‘weaponized words’.

### Marriage as Martyrdom

The last section of Werner’s paper on communication focuses on marriage. A recent blog by Abilene Marshall immediately caught my attention in this regard. The author picks up a phrase from Orthodox Christianity, ‘Marriage as Martyrdom’. It literally means giving myself fully to my spouse. Wendell Berry even speaks of it being a kind ‘dying’. One can apply this to the art and practice of communication within marriage. Ringma writes that, “true life has God at the centre and is other person regarding. The serving life derives from a life that is graced by God and this is true life.” (31) If I start with the

idea that communication is not about “me”, primarily it is about “them”, it becomes about “us”. Then I will bring that ‘other regarding’ approach into all my marital interactions. It isn’t that we have to be identical in personality and outlook. Love sees difference as an opportunity for love to be expressed. Kahnweiler writes in the context of one partner being more extroverted and the other more introverted that, “The truth is that opposite pairs require constant vigilance, careful maintenance and balance.” (32) It is so much easier to judge each other than to listen to one another. We need to follow David Kiersey’s advice in his book, *Please Understand Me*, “If I do not want what you want, please try not to tell me that my want is wrong...” (33)

*Maskenfreiheit, hiding behind the mask in marriage can be dangerous to the relationship and to our own wellbeing. Research consistently shows that more ‘judgeable’ people are psychologically better adjusted. True love casts out fear. When we know we are loved by our spouse, that we have in them an anam cara –Gaelic for “soul friend.” Communication becomes and expression of that security and love. (34)*

- (1) Psalm 139:14 TLB
- (2) Shakespeare, Hamlet
- (3) Johari Window, Building Self Awareness Trust.
- (4) Donald Rumsfeld, “Unknown Unknowns.”
- (5) Jung. Shadow side. NB: Jung didn’t co
- (6) Maria Konnikova, On Wearing Masks
- (7) Amy C. Edmondson, The Fearless Organization
- (8) Richard Rohr, Daily Blog 6/5/2024
- (9) Richard Rohr, Daily Blog 6/5/2024
- (10) Martin Buber, ‘I Thou’. A G Palmer MA lecture Notes ERM 2024
- (11) Martin Buber, ‘I Thou’. A G Palmer MA lecture Notes ERM 2024
- (12) George Ritzer, The McDonaldization of Society
- (13) Martin Buber, ‘I Thou’. A G Palmer MA lecture Notes ERM 2024
- (14) Fiske and Taylor, “Cognitive Miser” 1984
- (15) Daniel Kahneman, Thinking, Fast and Slow 2011
- (16) Paul Tieger, Speed Reading People 1999
- (17) Heidi Grant Halvorson, ‘We’re All Terrible at Understanding Each Other’ Harvard Business Review, April 16<sup>th</sup> 2015
- (18) Halvorson, ‘We’re All Terrible at Understanding Each Other’ Harvard Business Review, April 16<sup>th</sup> 2015
- (19) Gizem Oneri Uzun, ‘A Review of Communication, Body Language and Communication’ Researchgate. April 2021
- (20) Gizem Oneri Uzun, ‘A Review of Communication, Body Language and Communication’ Researchgate. April 2021
- (21) Stefani and De Marco, ‘Language, Gesture, and Emotional Communication: An Embodied View of Social Interaction’ Frontiers in Psychology. 24<sup>th</sup>/09/2019
- (22) Sam Horn, “What is the Eyebrow Test?,” Blog post 2015
- (23) Jeff Thompson, ‘Is Nonverbal Communication a Numbers Game?’ Psychology Today. Posted 30/9/2011
- (24) Jeff Thompson, ‘Is Nonverbal Communication a Numbers Game?’ Psychology Today. Posted 30/9/2011
- (25) Halvorson, ‘We’re All Terrible at Understanding Each Other’ Harvard Business Review, April 16<sup>th</sup> 2015
- (26) Halvorson, ‘We’re All Terrible at Understanding Each Other’ Harvard Business Review, April 16<sup>th</sup> 2015
- (27) Halvorson, ‘We’re All Terrible at Understanding Each Other’ Harvard Business Review, April 16<sup>th</sup> 2015
- (28) Mary Oliver, Have you ever tried to enter the long black branches of other people’s lives’. Nashville Public Library
- (29) Publius Syrus
- (30) Kathleen Norris, Dakota: A Spiritual Geography. 2001
- (31) Charles Ringma, Seize the Day with Dietrich Bonhoeffer 2000
- (32) Kahnweiler
- (33) David Kiersey and Marilyn M Bates, Please Understand Me. 1984
- (34) John O’Donohue, Anam Cara: Spiritual Wisdom from The Celtic World. 1997



Go up: Open Grave





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<https://emcapp.ignis.de/5/#/62>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/2/#/62>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/1/#/28>

## Can love destroy a human person?

## Czy miłość może niszczyć człowieka?

It seems not. Love seems incapable of destroying man, it seems only beneficent. Yet we know examples when this state brought poisonous fruits. A priest I knew justified various immoral actions of certain people by saying: "But they love each other." He forgot about many life situations in which love became the cause of misfortune or even crime. We know such examples. So maybe it wasn't true love?

To explain this, we need to refer to in-depth approaches to human philosophy. Let us note that there are two very similar but different states of man: love called in Latin "concupiscentia", i.e. love of desire, and love called "amor", i.e. spousal love, typical of lovers. Both of these states are deeply rooted in human sexuality and are

Wydaje się, że nie. Miłość wydaje się niezdolna do niszczenia człowieka, wydaje się wyłącznie dobroczynna. A przecież znamy przykłady, kiedy ten stan przynosił zatrute owoce. Pewien znany mi kapłan usprawiedliwiał różne niemoralne działania pewnych ludzi stwierdzeniem: „Przecież oni się kochają”. Zapominał o wielu sytuacjach życiowych, w których to miłość stała się powodem nieszczęść czy nawet zbrodni. Przecież znamy takie przykłady. Może to zatem nie była miłość prawdziwa?

Aby to wyjaśnić trzeba odwołać się do pogłębionych ujęć filozofii człowieka. Zauważmy, że są dwa bardzo podobne, ale różne stany człowieka: miłość zwana po łacinie „concupiscentia” czyli miłość pożądania i miłość zwana

very similar to each other. In both, we discover the physical attractiveness of another person as something that meets our needs. However, the former (concupiscentia) can and always harms the object of love, while the latter (amor) never harms the other. Perhaps this aspect escapes contemporaries because they do not refer to the full description of man, limiting themselves to the reduction to the material sphere. It is therefore appropriate to point out the structure of both types of love in which our body plays such an important role. We will be helped by St. Thomas Aquinas and several contemporary thinkers of Thomistic provenance (Wojtyła, Gogacz, Andrzejuk, Wojcieszek).

In St. Thomas Aquinas, the topic of love is discussed in various fragments of the same work "Summa Theologiae", in the so-called treatise on feelings and in the so-called treatise on virtues. These are fragments marked traditionally as: I-II, q.26 – 28; then in I-II, q. 62; II-II, q.23-33.

We also have other fragments relating to the issue of the hierarchy of love (in this order: God, myself, other people).

It is easy to oversee this differentiation, because in the first fragment the author refers to human feelings, while in the second he considers the issue of the relationship to God, and treats love as a special virtue. The question arises whether he is discussing two completely separate situations or one and the same human love? In my opinion, it is a description of the same human love, but in two separate aspects, and it is perfect for understanding the differences in the structure of love between people, and not only for describing human relationships with God.

For Saint Thomas, man is a psychophysical unity. We can distinguish the material sphere called "body" (material potency) from the spiritual sphere (popularly called "soul"), i.e. immaterial potency. Both types of love are formed by the same and one human soul, the form of both the body and the spiritual powers. This, in turn, is made real and actualized by one act of existence. In this approach, man is a psychophysical unity, he is neither an animal nor an angel. This

„amor” czyli miłość oblubieńcza, typowa dla zakochanych. Oba te stany są mocno zakorzenione w ludzkiej seksualności, bardzo do siebie podobne. W obu następuje odkrycie cielesnej atrakcyjności drugiego człowieka jako czegoś co zaspokaja nasze potrzeby. Jednak ta pierwsza (concupiscentia) może i zawsze krzywdzi obiekt miłości, a druga nie krzywdzi go nigdy. Być może ten aspekt umyka współczesnym, gdyż nie odwołują się do pełnego opisu człowieka, przestając na redukcji do sfery materialnej. Wypada zatem wskazać na strukturę obu rodzajów miłości, w których nasze ciało odgrywa tak istotną rolę. Pomocą będzie nam służyć św. Tomasz z Akwinu i kilku współczesnych myślicieli tomistycznej proweniencji (Wojtyła, Gogacz, Andrzejuk, Wojcieszek).

U św. Tomasza z Akwinu temat miłości jest omawiany w różnych fragmentach tego samego traktatu „Summa Theologiae”. W tzw. traktacie o uczuciach i tzw. traktacie o cnotach. Są to fragmenty oznaczone jako: I-II, q.26 – 28; następnie w I-II, q. 62; II-II, q.23-33.

Mamy też inne fragmenty odnoszące się do zagadnienia hierarchii miłości (kolejność: Bóg, ja sam, inni ludzie).

Łatwo pominąć tę różnicę, gdyż w pierwszym fragmencie autor odnosi się do ludzkich uczuć, zaś w drugim rozważa zagadnienie relacji do Boga, a miłość ujmuje jako specjalną cnotę. Powstaje pytanie, czy omawia dwie sytuacje całkowicie osobne czy też jedną i tę samą ludzką miłość? Moim zdaniem jest to opis tej samej ludzkiej miłości, ale w dwu osobnych aspektach i nadaje się on znakomicie do zrozumienia różnic w strukturze miłości między ludźmi, a nie jedynie do opisu ludzkich relacji z Bogiem.

Dla św. Tomasza człowiek jest jednością psychofizyczną. Potrafimy w nim odróżnić sferę materialną zwaną „ciałem” (możność materialna) od sfery duchowej (popularnie zwanej „duszą”) czyli możliwości niematerialnej. Oba rodzaje miłości formuje ta sama i jedna dusza ludzka, forma zarówno ciała, jak i władz duchowych. Tę z kolei urealniamy i aktualizujemy jeden akt istnienia. Człowiek jest w tym ujęciu jednością psychofizyczną, nie jest ani zwierzęciem, ani aniołem.

approach is very different from the Platonic type of approach, in which the material and immaterial spheres are very separate (Plato, Plotinus, St. Augustine, Descartes). At this point, Saint Thomas' view resembles the approach of contemporary psychologists who emphasize the unity of man. An important difference is the insistence of St. Thomas on a strictly immaterial aspect. In this he follows Aristotle and his treatise "Peri psyche".

Since man is one, his love (or various loves) must also be one. But some aspect comes from the material potency (the body), and some from the immaterial potency (personal relationships). The former was traditionally referred to as feelings. What are they in classical terms? They are the reactions of bodily drives to the idea of bodily good or evil. Material cognitive faculties create a material representation of an object (Latin: species sensibilis) and it regulates material drives (classically: basic drive and acquisitive drive). Everything here remains on the corporeal, material plane. Feelings understood in this way are very similar to animal feelings. Their task is to protect the homeostasis of the body. They arise from biology and come down to biological interests. Why only "animal-like"? Because they have the property of cooperation with the immaterial sphere of man, which is not present in animals. The human system of feelings remains open to the immaterial sphere, to the work of intellect and will. In animals it closes, in humans it opens to "something more". This "something more" consists of the completely different reactions of the immaterial sphere called personal relationships. They are a reaction to the so-called transcendentals, i.e. manifestations of the act of existence of another person, captured in the action of mental faculties (truth, goodness and reality). The peculiarity of man is the natural duality of references to other people. Human love is always "two-component". People connect both through feelings and personal relationships. Therefore, there are ALWAYS two loves in us - emotional (material) and relational (immaterial). The two combined in one reference, but not the same. Maybe it's better to say two aspects of love?

To ujęcie jest bardzo inne od ujęcia typu platońskiego, w którym sfera materialna i niematerialna są bardzo oddzielone (Platon, Plotyn, św. Augustyn, Kartezjusz). Ujęcie św. Tomasza przypomina w tym punkcie podejście współczesnych psychologów, którzy akcentują jedność człowieka. Ważną różnicą jest wskazanie św. Tomasza na aspekt ściśle niematerialny. Idzie w tym za Arystotelesem i jego traktatem „Peri psyche”.

Skoro człowiek jest jednością, to i jego miłość (czy różne miłości) musi być jednością. Lecz jakiś aspekt pochodzi od możliwości materialnej (ciała), a jakiś od niematerialnej. Ten pierwszy określano tradycyjnie mianem uczuć. Czym są w ujęciu klasycznym? Są reakcją cielesnych popędów na wyobrażenie dobra lub zła cielesnego. Materialne władze poznawcze tworzą materialną reprezentację obiektu (łac. species sensibilis) i ona reguluje materialne popędy (klasycznie: popęd zasadniczy i popęd zdobywczy). Wszystko tu pozostaje na płaszczyźnie cielesnej, materialnej. Tak rozumiane uczucia są bardzo podobne do zwierzęcych. Ich zadaniem jest chronić homeostazę ciała. Wyrastają z biologii i do biologicznych interesów się sprowadzają. Dlaczego tylko „podobne do zwierzęcych”? Ponieważ mają własność współpracy ze sferą niematerialną człowieka, której nie ma u zwierząt. Ludzki system uczuć pozostaje otwarty na sferę niematerialną, na pracę intelektu i woli. U zwierząt się zamyka, u ludzi otwiera na „coś więcej”. To „coś więcej” to zupełnie inne reakcje sfery niematerialnej zwane relacjami osobowymi. Są reakcją na tzw. transcendentalia czyli przejawy aktu istnienia drugiego człowieka, ujmowane w działaniu władz umysłowych (na prawdę, na dobro i na realność). Osobliwością człowieka jest naturalna podwójność odniesień do drugiego człowieka. Ludzka miłość jest zawsze „dwuskładnikowa”. Ludzie łączą się zarazem przy pomocy uczuć, jak i przy pomocy relacji osobowych. Są zatem w nas ZAWSZE dwie miłości – uczuciowa (materialna) i relacyjna (niematerialna). Dwie połączone w jednym odniesieniu, ale nie tożsame. Może lepiej powiedzieć dwa aspekty miłości?



**Night Light**

In the love of desire, feelings, materiality, and the interests of the body gain the upper hand. In the spousal relationship (amor, dilectio eros), personal relationships prevail (the immaterial sphere). Therefore, spousal love has always been considered the love proper to man, defined in Latin as "dilectio" - personal love.

Returning to the opinion of a certain priest mentioned at the beginning. To establish the "innocence" or "sinlessness" of the lovers, he would have to precisely determine what kind of love unites them - "concupiscentia" or "amor". If it were "amor", I would be calm, because the personal relationship of love does not destroy a person, but protects him, protects him in the most important aspect - in the existence that the intellect contemplates. However, if it were "concupiscentia", I would be afraid, because this type of love always brings various misfortunes to people: breakdown of relationships, sexual abuse, rape, even murder. In my country there was an incident where a woman, a single mother, started a hot affair in which her child was seen as a hindrance. She ordered his drowning, as the investigation revealed. There are many such cases, although rarely so drastic. It is in this love that the relationship between sin and death exists. Humanity has always sensed this, but it has not been precisely explained.

It remains to point out the dependence of the understanding of love on the type of philosophical anthropology we use. In a purely material model (e.g. Enlightenment), we are left with only love based on feelings, "concupiscentia". In the Platonic or Neoplatonic (Cartesian) model, matter is an object of contempt. However, man is not an angel and cannot love only spiritually. This is where the Neoplatonists' aversion to sexual activity came from. While struggling with the Christianity of the first centuries, they probably passed on this attitude to some extent to the enemy, i.e. the Christian civilization of Europe, in the form of lack of trust in sexuality (especially women's). This can be seen, for example, in St. Augustine, severely tested by youthful love of desire, the fruit of which was the son Adeodatus, and the lover of a woman unknown to us by name. This prudery

W miłości pożądania przewagę uzyskują uczucia, materialność, interes ciała. W miłości oblubieńczej przeważają relacje osobowe (sfera niematerialna). Dlatego miłość oblubieńczą uznawano zawsze za właściwą człowiekowi miłość określaną po łacinie jako „dilectio” – miłość osobowa.

Wracając do wspomnianej na początku opinii pewnego kapłana. Aby ustalić „niewinność” czy „bezgrzeszność” kochanków musiałby on precyzyjnie ustalić jakiego rodzaju miłość ich łączy – „concupiscentia” czy „amor”. Gdyby to był „amor”, to byłbym spokojny, bo relacja osobowa miłości nie niszczy człowieka, lecz go chroni, chroni w najważniejszym aspekcie – w istnieniu, które kontempluje intelekt. Natomiast gdyby to była „concupiscentia”, to miałbym obawy, gdyż ten rodzaj miłości zawsze sprowadza na ludzi różnorakie nieszczęścia: rozpad więzi, wykorzystanie seksualne, gwałt, nawet zabójstwo. W moim kraju zdarzył się wypadek, że pewna kobieta, samotna matka, nawiązała gorący romans, w którym dziecko jej przeszkadzało. Zleciła jego utopienie, co wykazało śledztwo. Tego rodzaju przypadków jest wiele, chociaż rzadko tak drastyczne. To na terenie tej miłości istnieje związek grzechu i śmierci. Ludzkość przeczuwała to od zawsze, ale nie umiano tego precyzyjnie wyjaśnić.

Pozostaje jeszcze wskazać na zależność rozumienia miłości od rodzaju antropologii filozoficznej, jaką się posługujemy. W modelu wyłącznie materialnym (np. oświeceniowym) pozostaje nam jedynie miłość oparta na uczuciach, „concupiscentia”. W modelu platońskim czy neoplatońskim (kartezjańskim) materia jest przedmiotem pogardy, zatem i uczucia. Jednak człowiek nie jest aniołem i nie może kochać wyłącznie duchowo. Stąd brała się niechęć neoplatoników do aktywności seksualnej. Zmagając się programowo z chrześcijaństwem pierwszych wieków zapewne przekazali to nastawienie w jakiejś mierze przeciwnikowi czyli cywilizacji chrześcijańskiej Europy w postaci braku zaufania do seksualności (zwłaszcza kobiecej). Widać to chociażby u św. Augustyna, ciężko doświadczonego młodzieńczą miłością pożądania, której owocem był syn Adeodatus,

in culture was noticed by, for example, S. Freud, but also much earlier... by St. Thomas Aquinas. In his model, where man is by nature a unity of matter and spirit, additionally adjusted in the form of the so-called *commensuratio*, both aspects of love are important, as long as the love of desire does not prevail over relationship love. Evidence of Aquinas' appreciation of matters of the body is his extensive and detailed treatise on the feelings in "Summa Theologiae". And some detailed decisions, such as the justification of... women's tailors. This issue was raised out of fear that this profession would lead directly to hell. Why? Because the tailor's role is to highlight a woman's bodily assets through clothing. Saint Thomas ruled that tailors would not be condemned because of their profession because they operated within human nature. This is how it's supposed to be. And where is the backward Middle Ages? Let us add that St. Thomas was extremely pure sexually. More than the average monk of his time. And yet he appreciated human corporeality and our natural drives. This topic was recently taken up by Karol Wojtyła in his monumental work "Love and Responsibility", and later as John Paul II in a series of catecheses on human corporeality and the full naturalness of being a woman and a man. Human nature is multifold, just like human love.

Now let's look at our social world. Is this understood and respected? Or maybe deficiencies in this area contribute to an epidemic of loneliness, sadness and depression?

a kochanką nieznaną nam z imienia kobieta. Tę pruderię w kulturze zauważył np. Z. Freud, ale znacznie wcześniej ... św. Tomasz z Akwinu. W jego modelu, gdzie człowiek jest z natury jednością materii i ducha, dodatkowo dopasowaną w postaci tzw. *commensuratio*, ważne są oba aspekty miłości, byle tylko miłość pożądania nie górowała nad miłością obłubieńczą. Dowodem na docenianie przez Akwinatę spraw ciała jest obszerny i dokładny traktat o uczuciach w „Summa Theologiae”. I pewne szczegółowe rozstrzygnięcia, jak chociażby usprawiedliwienie... krawców damskich. Postawiono te kwestię obawiając się, że ten zawód prowadzi wprost do piekła. Dlaczego? Ponieważ rolą krawca jest uwydatnić walory cielesne kobiety poprzez ubiór. Św. Tomasz orzekł, że krawcy nie będą potępieni z powodu swego zawodu, ponieważ działają w ramach natury człowieka. To tak ma być. I gdzie tu zacofane średniowiecze? Dodajmy, że św. Tomasz był pod względem seksualności niezwykle czysty. Bardziej, niż przeciętny zakonnik jego czasów. A mimo to doceniał ludzką cielesność i naturalne nasze popędy. Tematykę tę podjął współcześnie Karol Wojtyła w wiekopomnej pracy „Miłość i odpowiedzialność”, a później jako Jan Paweł II w cyklu katechez na temat ludzkiej cielesności i pełnej naturalności bycia kobietą i mężczyzną. Natura ludzka jest wielorako podwójna, tak jak i ludzka miłość.

A teraz przyjrzyjmy się naszemu światu społecznemu. Czy jest to rozumiane i szanowane? A może braki w tej dziedzinie składają się na epidemię samotności, smutku i depresji?



Eve Of Silence



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He investigates de post modern subjectivity, and religion and spirituality of the person in contemporary world.

## Comment to “Can love destroy a human person?”

Cristopher A. Wojcieszek's paper entitled Can love destroy a human person? conveys a competent discussion about the question of love, using fruitful ground in philosophy. to support his arguments The article makes an important discussion in contemporary problem's perspective, in which the word love is being used frivolously, to address phenomena very distant from those discussions on love in the cultural heritage of humanity.

Several authors have addressed the issue of love as an ontological position and gesture. Much is lost when we understand love simply as an erratic drive or as an emotion. Vladimir Solovyov (SOLOVYOV, V. The Meaning of Love. London, Lindisfarne Books, 1985.), for example, tried to contemplate the complexity of love, highlighting its meaning and dignity of love as a feeling, since it demanded that we recognize for others the same absolute significance that, because of our selfishness, we are aware only for our own selves. Love is important not only as one of our feelings, but as the possibility of transferring our interest from ourselves to Another. For this author, the meaning of human love is the event that enables the sacrifice of selfishness. It leads the person to leave his own

self towards the Other. Very different from the often-degraded use of the word love, to denominate a simple desire to fulfill one self's own desires.

The clinical situation shows us that there is a primordial desire in human beings to achieve the possibility of becoming “us”. The individual is born into a family environment (us) and longs to achieve the experience of becoming “us”, through the experience of friendship, marital-family and community relationships. From this perspective, the maturation of the capacity to love establishes as an existential horizon, a life project, which allows the person the possibility of becoming “us” amid the community.

In leaving one's own self in favor to the Other, through the experience of love, the loved one becomes a presence (not an object), when he is then accepted and welcomed not only by his past, by his present, but fundamentally by a future, with whom one can experience the we-community event. Whoever loves another does so, for what he was, for what he is, and for what he could become.

Love implies keeping the other at the heart of the soul, guarding the stature of his dignity and his potential for development of himself in the



future. The parents, the friend, the lover guards the future of the loved one and the possibilities of the fulfillment of his future.

In the same perspective, Mikhail Bakhtin (BAKHTIN, M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* by M. M. Bakhtin. Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1981.) pointed out in his works that, it is the Other who loves us, who will keep the totality of ourselves in his memory. Totality that has not yet happened. Also, Vladimir Solovyov states that love is necessarily zealous, because it guards the good that the loved person is for us and could become in his future. The loving presence of others sustains the value of oneself. A person's resilience happens through the memory of the other's love within himself.

The perspective presented here can be considered in the relationship between Jesus Christ and John the Baptist, a relationship discussed by the Christian tradition as presenting an onto-

logical paradigm of friendship. John the Baptist's speech is a fundamental reference when he states that he must diminish himself for Jesus to appear in His Greatness. The love presented here does not imply that decreasing one's own self abolish the value of oneself, on the contrary, this action expands the experience of oneself through love openness to the other. That is Love as a reflection of the Christ's Love: Kenosis.



**Morning Star**



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## Christian Love is Both Agape and Eros

Through Christian revelation, God reveals himself as a mystery of love. God not only gives creation to itself; he loves it and does so to the utmost. This understanding of God as absolute love fulfills the revelation of God as being (Exod 14:4; John 8:28) and transforms the Greek understanding of the Good. There is of course a sense in which the Good and love are synonymous. Love too, as revealed by Jesus Christ (1 John 4:8 and 16), regards the very essence of God. However, they do not coincide fully. Let us note three aspects of what love unfolds of the nature of God.

First, the identification of love with the divine [being](esse) permits a vision of love as witnessing to the [transcendental character](transcendentality) of the transcendental properties of being (one, true, good, and beauty), rather than as a simple synonym for goodness. Love grants a dynamic unity and intensification to the co-extensiveness of being, unity, truth, good, and beauty. In his being absolute love, God is one, true, beautiful, and living. This transcendental absoluteness can be seen in the self-revelation of himself to himself as the eternal communication of the totality of onen-

ess, unity, good, truth, beauty, and live to the other.

The second aspect that love unfolds is the personality of the Godhead. God is not only the fullness of being and goodness in the objective sense. He is superabundant being, goodness, wisdom, and life because he is also a personal being who exists as an infinite relation of love in which one has always already given himself over to the other two completely. Due to the inseparability of love and logos in God, divine revelation does not lead to an understanding of the concept of "person" as marked by a random, arbitrary will, but rather as a mystery of dialogue and constitutive relation with another. Personhood, in light of revelation, is recognized as the perfection of being, first in God and analogically in the human being. God's selfcommunicating goodness always exists as a communion of persons. The eternal communication of his own goodness (Deus Trinitas) is, analogically speaking, a loving, ever-greater, eternal encounter of the divine persons.

Third, the relation between love and person also means that God's communication of his

own being is accompanied by fruition. God not only communicates his being; he takes delight in doing so and, moreover, desires that the other participate in both the giving and the delight of loving and being loved by the other. There is no love without the delight of being loved and sharing this delight with the other. The love that is at the origin of creation *ex nihilo* [out of nothing] is not an ornamental cloak over an exercise of power. When we say that God loves the world into existence we mean that he communicates his own goodness and being to what he is not [finite being].

While love unveils these three dimensions of the nature of the Good and so gives rise to a reading of the *summum bonum* [greatest good] as *summa caritas* [greatest love], love is also a gift given (in God and from God). There is a circularity between love and gift that prevents us from reading love simply as a faculty of the will, and gift as an object of that love. Love is gift, and gift, in its highest expression, is love. Love is not just one gift given among others. Love is what makes gifts be gifts and not mere exchanges of property. It is love that ensures the purity of the giver's and the receiver's intentions. Alexander of Hales, describing the properties of the Holy Spirit, writes that love is what is given in whatever is given. Love, says Aquinas, "has the nature of the first gift, and through it all gratuitous gifts are given" (ST I, q. 38, a.2). What love gives is itself, that is, it gives being with all the incomprehensible ever-greater unity of its transcendentals. It gives it so that the other can be. Creation *ex nihilo* is God's absolute affirmation that generates another, one that is identical to the origin (the Son), and another that is what he is not [created, finite being]. This communication is an expression of his love for the world, and it is given so that the concrete singular may experience from within, taste, and take delight in his love.

Human love has its roots in the creative affirmation of the [creature], according to which God says: it is good for you to be (Gen 1:31). Willing man's ultimate good, God wishes the creature to participate in his life, to dwell in

him. Because of this divine love, every true lover wills the good of the beloved (Aquinas, SCG, bk. 3, c. 90 [no. 2657]). In light of the circularity between gift and love we can suggest now that gift is the mystery of the communication of love whose unity is also one of ever-greater differentiation.

To express the mystery of unity and difference in a third specific to love [the Triune God], and so to better understand the gratuity proper to the giving and the receiving of the gift, we need to look briefly at the two indissociable terms that come together in the name love, that is, *eros* and *agape*. Love has an oblation, *agapic* dimension and a desirous, *erotic* dimension. *Eros*, a god for the Greeks, has an ambiguous nature. The offspring of *poros* (wealth) and *penia* (poverty), *eros*, so Plato recounts, indicates need and precariousness and, at the same time, impetuosity, the desire for wisdom (Symposium, 201a–204d). *Eros* is not a self-motivated impulse. It is awakened by beauty. This beauty is first the corporeal beauty, which attracts and entices the lover out of himself because it is the overflowing of the eternal beauty in a concrete form. We thus find the first connotation of *eros*: the beginning of desire lies in a certain given participation in beauty. *Eros* is moved by something else, in which it seeks the fullness of what it has foretasted. Receiving the form of beauty, *eros* engages the whole of the person, including the body, and drives the person to transcend himself. Desire tears him away from his own limitations. This, then, is the second connotation: *eros* not only indicates the need to receive; it also draws the person to seek unity with what he still does not possess. Seeking unity with love itself, *eros* moves the lover upwards to the root of beings. Love "thirsts," so to speak, for the beauty that comes to it first. This is why *eros* has been described as the ascending dimension of love.

We can say further, and apart from the Neoplatonic tradition, that, anthropologically speaking, *eros* as the desire of unity with the other, includes physical conjugal union. Yet, the union that desire seeks is better perceived in its hig-

hest degree: spiritual indwelling. Eros, again, is the desiring dimension of love that seeks unity with the other. Undoubtedly, eros tends to be burdened by its own ambiguity, which, as Benedict XVI says, is that the erotic force can overpower reason. Eros, separated from logos (truth, reason), can become a sort of "divine madness" (*Deus caritas est*, no. 4) which results in self-destructive excesses. If united to truth (logos) eros seeks a union that does not reduce the good of the other to the satisfaction of one's own whims.

It is important, at this point, to correct a common misunderstanding. The fact that when eros is separated from logos becomes an irrational, maddening desire does not mean that the yearning for unity with the other, the need both for the other and to be received by the other, is in itself negative. One does not understand the nature of conjugal union, for example, by starting out from instances of sexual degradation and violence; in the same vein, eros goes equally misunderstood if greed or lust is taken as its complete form. If eros and agape are two inseparable dimensions of love, this desire is in itself a perfection. In fact, Aquinas says, every creature yearns for God according to the degree proper to its own participation in being (*Quodlibetum*, I, q. 4, a. 3). Thus, eros reveals that the perfection of oneself is not in oneself. The lover desires to be one with the beloved who already somehow dwells in the lover. The lover desires, needs, and implores that the beloved let him be part of her as she is in him. Eros indicates that the lover cannot give to himself that of which he already has a foretaste; it must be given to him gratuitously. This is the radical poverty of eros: not that it does not know love, but that it puts itself at the disposal of the other's gift, oriented itself towards a reception whose occurrence and measure does not lie at its disposal. Of course, human desires are always in need of purification. The desire for unity tends to become possessiveness. Yet to consider the poverty proper to eros as an imperfection presupposes a negative anthropology, according to which all desires are taken a priori as sinful. A love that does not desire is a love that cannot suffer and, as such, is a love that

cannot find joy in being welcomed by the other. The giving of a gift is an expression of love (eros) inasmuch as it is both a response to a preceding gift and a yearning for a response, a gratuitous unity with the receiver.

If the erotic dimension of love acknowledges the possibility to receive the other and the search for unity with the other, the agapic dimension highlights the oblation [sacrificial] gift of self. To love another is to love its good. To love its good, however, always requires surrendering oneself to the other, living for the other's sake, giving oneself to the other. Agape represents love's katalogical [downward] movement. Just as it is proper to love to ask (eros), it is also a perfection of love to kneel (agape). The lover who is intent only on seeking the unity turns the beloved into a means for self-satisfaction. Instead, the true lover, that is, the person whose agape is true, spends himself for the sake of the beloved. He wishes to affirm the beloved with the radical gift of self. The love that keeps too close an eye on what it has done, acquired, or sacrificed for the sake of the beloved suffocates both parties. This is why agape purifies eros. It ensures that the desire to be one with the other is for the other's sake and not for one's own profit. Agape helps logos give form to eros. At the same time, eros is intrinsic to agape because the love that gives without receiving or being permanently open to receive from the other is, in reality, a denial of self. Eros without agape becomes egotism—in this case, the gift will crush the receiver. Agape without eros is a denial of self. A self-effacing offering of oneself without the simultaneous delight in and plea to be received by the other, that is, without an awareness of what one receives in giving and gives in receiving, is yet another form of egotism, this time under the form of piety. The gift without the giver is no longer a gift.

Eros and agape are two dimensions of the same form of love. From the point of view of the unity between the giver, the gift, and the receiver, we can now see that whereas eros emphasizes the unifying aspect of love, agape underscores the difference between them. Love posits an-

other [that] is different from itself, in order that this other might be (agape). Love, in doing so, also seeks to be received within the other itself to dwell in it (eros). Love does not want to be received by the other in order to disappear in or use the other, but rather to enjoy a gratuitous and, in a term that will be explained later, virginal unity with the other (agape).

The agapic dimension of love is perceived as a perfection of love thanks to Christian revelation. While the Aristotelian unmoved mover or the Plotinian One does not care for the world, the God of Jesus Christ does. Love is what is most proper to God. He alone, without losing himself, can give himself to what he is not because, in himself, he exists as a tripersonal communion of love. It is at the level of three divine persons [Father, Son, Holy Spirit] that the relation between eros, agape, and logos indicated earlier finally becomes clear. The perfection of love, where the beloved without regard for himself gives all of himself to the other, all the while desiring to be loved by this other, is protected from egotism through the third that both unites them and preserves their distinction. Love gives itself, a relation of personal indwelling in which everything is given and shared ....[However,] this relation does not collapse into the giver or the receiver because of this third, who represents at the personal level the objective unity between the giver and the receiver. The complete form of love is marked by the giving and receiving known as *koinonia* [communion]. In this communion, as Christian revelation confirms, the third is both fruit and summit of the love that binds the lover to and distinguishes him from the beloved. This *koinonia*, when referred to God, describes both the unity of love and its preservation of the difference of giver, gift, and receiver.

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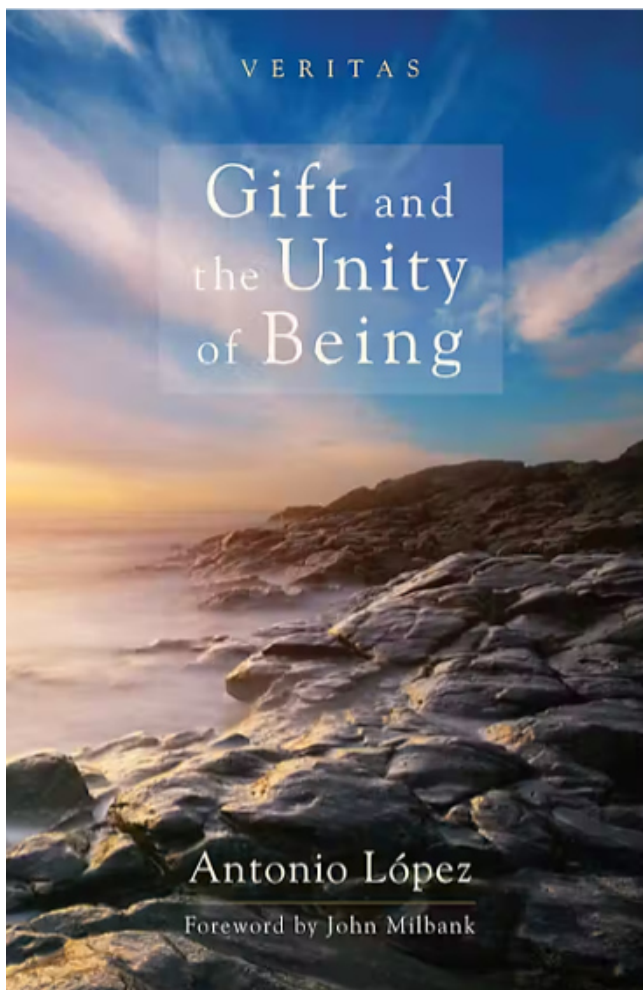
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Here you can read more:

[https://books.google.de/books?id=r5dNAwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ViewAPI&hl=de&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.de/books?id=r5dNAwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ViewAPI&hl=de&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false)



**0-Antiphone: King Of Nations**



**0-Antiphone: Emmanuel**

**More Practical Orientated**



**Khrystyna Filits**  
(Ukraine / Ukrayina)

Psychiatrist, psychotherapist  
Member of the Ukrainian Association of Christian  
Psychology

Христина Філіц  
Лікар-психіатр, психотерапевт.  
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## **Bibliotherapy as love therapy in the comprehensive treat- ment of anxiety-depressive disorders**

**Abstract.** In the article, the author substantiates the effectiveness of bibliotherapy in the comprehensive treatment of anxiety-depressive disorders through the "love therapy" of the Word of God. Using an example from her own medical practice, the author shows the positive impact of reading the Holy Scriptures on improving the mental health of the patient, proves the feasibility of taking into account such principles of bibliotherapy as systematicity and describing the patient's reflections in the context of love for oneself, love for others, and love for God. The author concludes that through experiencing catharsis on the basis of the Holy Scriptures, there is a reduction in internal tension and anxiety, and psychological relief is observed. God's Love and its realization become the driving force behind the patient's experience of catharsis.

Bibliotherapy is far from new, but a 'careful' and tactful method of treatment and prevention not only of borderline but also of other mental disorders. In particular, bibliotherapy is a kind of dementia prevention method. Even ordinary reading of books acts as a therapeutic

## **Бібліотерапія як терапія любов'ю в комплексному лікуванні тривожно- депресивних розладів**

**Анотація.** У статті авторка обґрунтовує ефективність бібліотерапії у комплексному лікуванні тривожно-депресивних розладів завдяки «терапії любов'ю» Божого Слова. На прикладі із власної лікарської практики авторка показує позитивний вплив читання Святого Письма на покращення психічного здоров'я пацієнта, доводить доцільність урахування таких принципів застосування бібліотерапії, як: системність; описування рефлексій пацієнта в контексті любові до себе, любові до людей, любові до Бога. Авторка робить висновок, що завдяки проживанню катарсису на основі Святого Письма, відбувається зменшення внутрішньої напруги, тривоги, спостерігається психологічне полегшення. Божа Любов та її усвідомлення стає рушійним стимулом проживання катарсису пацієнта.

Бібліотерапія далеко не новий, проте «обережний» та тактовний метод лікування та профілактики не тільки межових, але й інших психічних розладів. Зокрема, бібліотерапія є своєрідним методом

and preventive non-invasive tool. Already in the Middle Ages, there was an understanding of the healing power of the word, which gave a special status to books. Monastic libraries served not only as repositories of knowledge but also as places of strength and spiritual healing. And a significant role in this was played by wise books that healed the soul. The significant healing influence of spiritual literature, mainly the Bible, is explained by the fact that this Book is imbued with God's love (agape) and has a unique and incomparable impact on the soul of the individual. And it is the soul that is responsible for the health of the psyche (psyche - from the Greek soul) of a person.

God's unconditional love has an unprecedented ability to heal both physically and mentally. However, healing occurs only if the person accepts this Love.

Life's troubles can traumatize the human psyche and contribute to the development of anxiety, depressive, phobic, and other personality disorders. At the same time, a person may find themselves on the verge of psychotic illnesses. There are no guarantees that they will be able to cope with psychotraumatic situations. And accordingly, there are no guarantees that their condition will not turn into chronic mental health issues.

Each individual has their own level of stress resistance, temperament, and world orientation towards various life circumstances. Some are traumatized by losing their job, while others fall into depression due to a minor failure; some worry about the future because intrusive thoughts disturb their peace, and some react in a panic due to reasons that are 'primitive' for most. However, in the conditions of the war (as a result of Russia's attack on Ukraine), a gradual decrease in the stress resistance of the Ukrainian population is being observed.

It is bibliotherapy that can become the accessible and important direction of psychological assistance to the population of Ukraine, which, in the vast majority, considers itself to be part of the Christian environment. Especially if we take

профілактики деменції. Навіть звичайне читання книг виступає в якості лікувально-профілактичним неінвазивним інструментом. Так вже в період Середньовіччя було розуміння цілющої сили слова, що надавало особливого статусу книгам. Бібліотеки монастирів служили не лише сховищами знань, але й місцями сили та духовного зцілення. І значну роль в цьому відігравали мудрі книги, які зцілювали душу. Значний цілющий вплив духовної літератури, головним чином, Біблії, пояснюється тим, що ця Книга пронизана Божою любов'ю (agape) та має особливий і неповторний вплив на душу особистості. І саме душа відповідає за психічне здоров'я (психе - з грец. душа) людини.

Безумовна Божа любов безпрецедентно здатна зцілювати як фізично, так і психічно. Проте, зцілення відбувається лише за умови, що особа приймає цю Любов.

Життєві негаразди здатні травмувати людську психіку і сприяти розвитку тривожних, депресивних, фобічних та інших розладів в особистості. При цьому людина здатна опинитися на межі психотичних захворювань. І не має гарантій, що вона буде спроможною впоратися з психотравмівними ситуаціями. А відповідно, не має гарантій, що її стан не перейде в хронічні проблеми з ментальним здоров'ям.

Кожна особистість має свій рівень стресостійкості, свій темперамент й світоорієнтовальне налаштування щодо різних життєвих обставин. Когось травмує втрата роботи, а хтось заходить у депресію через незначну невдачу, хтось тривожиться за майбутнє, бо не дають спокою нав'язливі думки, а хтось реагує панічно через «примітивні» для більшості причини. Проте, в умовах війни (в наслідок нападу росії на Україну) поступово спостерігається зниження стресостійкості у населення України.

І саме бібліотерапія може стати тим доступним та важливим напрямком

into account that the financial capability of the population in the conditions of the war sharply declines, which prevents people from fully taking care of their mental health. Therefore, under such conditions, bibliotherapy serves as the most accessible method of psychological assistance. With the help of bibliotherapy, clients work through not only deep emotional experiences and conflicts, but also existential inconsistencies, challenges, and responses. Through experiencing catharsis on the basis of Holy Scripture, there is a reduction in internal tension and anxiety, and psychological relief is observed. God's love and its realization become the driving force behind experiencing catharsis.

Bibliotherapy allows the client to change their perspective of assessing the problem, leading to a change in attitude towards the problem and client behavior patterns, and enables the analysis of the true causes of their problems. At the same time, the client undergoes a sort of involvement/empathy with the characters of the stories, which also allows them to rethink their own life. Reading develops emotional intelligence and critical thinking, promotes reflection, stimulates cognitive processes, reduces stress levels, activates empathy, and contributes to personal growth, both intellectual and spiritual.

Bibliotherapy involves the use of a variety of methods and techniques that are individually tailored to meet the needs of the client. This approach works great with both children and adults. In bibliotherapy, the texts of the Gospels have proven themselves quite well, activating the client's ability for analysis, reflection, and awareness. On the basis of the Gospel texts, it is possible to discuss the real problems of the client from the perspective of the 'here and now', and develop communication skills, empathy, and the ability to love. For example, with the help of biblical texts, it is possible to discuss the problems of school stress with teenagers, and with elderly people, overcome feelings of loneliness, and stimulate cognitive activity, which activates brain processes and prevents the development of dementia.

психологічної допомоги населенню України, яке, в переважній більшості, зараховує себе до християнського середовища. Особливо, якщо врахувати, що фінансова спроможність населення в умовах війни різко падає і це не дозволяє людям в повній мірі подбати про своє ментальне здоров'я. Тож за подібних умов бібліотерапія виступає в якості найдоступнішого методу психологічної допомоги. За допомогою бібліотерапії клієнти опрацьовують не лише глибинні емоційні переживання та конфлікти, але й екзистенційні неузгодженості, виклики та відгуки. Через проживання катарсису на основі Святого Письма, відбувається зменшення внутрішньої напруги, тривоги, спостерігається психологічне полегшення. Божа Любов та її усвідомлення стає рушійним стимулом проживання катарсису.

Бібліотерапія дозволяє клієнту змінити ракурс оцінки проблеми, що призводить до зміни ставлення до проблеми, патернів поведінки клієнта, дозволяє проаналізувати справжні причини його проблем. При цьому, клієнт проходить своєрідне сопричастя/співпереживання героям оповідей, що дозволяє йому також переосмислити власне життя. Читання розвиває емоційний інтелект, критичне мислення, сприяє рефлексії, стимулює когнітивні процеси, знижує рівень стресу, активізує емпатію, сприяє особистісному зростанню, як інтелектуальному, так і духовному.

Бібліотерапія передбачає використання цілої низки методів і технік, які підбираються індивідуально до потреб клієнта. Цей підхід чудово працює як з дітьми, так і з дорослими. В бібліотерапії досить добре зарекомендували себе тексти Євангелій, які активізують у клієнта здатність до аналізу, рефлексії, усвідомленості. На підставі Євангельських текстів можна обговорювати реальні проблеми клієнта з позиції «тепер та зараз», розвивати комунікативні навички, емпатію, здатність любити. Так, наприклад, за допомогою біблійних текстів можна обговорювати проблеми шкільних стресів у

According to Yu. Dresher (2008), bibliotherapy has a special corrective effect on clients in terms of stabilizing and normalizing their mental state. Similarly, A. Miller was a proponent of the effectiveness of the method, proposing his hypothesis on bibliotherapy, which is based on systematic reading aimed to improve the mental state of clients (see: Alexeychik, 1985).

Before describing the tools of bibliotherapy, I will provide an example of a clinical case from psychological practice. The client complained of low mood and apathy alternating with anxiety. She also complained of a feeling of general fatigue, reduced productivity, poor sleep and appetite. In addition to the above-mentioned symptoms, the client also had gastrointestinal tract issues such as meteorism, nausea, constipation, and sometimes diarrhea. Doctors have diagnosed irritable bowel syndrome.

The specified symptoms were manifested at the peak of psychotic symptoms. In particular, the client describes it in these words: "I felt nauseous when I was either very sad, or very worried, or experiencing another stress." Doctors prescribed medication and psychotherapeutic treatment, and later bibliotherapy was suggested as one of the tools of psychotherapy. We chose the Bible for psychotherapy because the client had long wanted to try reading it. At the time bibliotherapy was started, the client had been taking antidepressants for two months. A plan of assistance was developed with Bible passages. In just a few days, we collectively began to observe that the effectiveness of the comprehensive medication-psychotherapeutic treatment increased after the addition of bibliotherapy. Importantly, almost all symptoms were eliminated in a short period (two to three weeks), and the client felt a complete recovery after a month of planned reading of the biblical texts we selected. The client was ready to discontinue antidepressants and even general psychotherapy. However, such a refusal would have been irrational, as according to the protocols, 'stepping down' from antidepressants should occur after six months according to the titration scheme in the

підлітків, а з людьми похилого віку – долати відчуття самотності, та стимулювати когнітивну активність, що активізує мозкові процеси і перешкоджає розвитку деменції.

На думку Ю. Дрешер (2008), саме бібліотерапія має особливий корекційний вплив на клієнтів щодо стабілізації та нормалізації їх психічного стану. Так само прибічником думки про продуктивність методу була А. Міллер, яка запропонував свою гіпотезу про бібліотерапію, що ґрунтується на систематичному читанні з метою покращення психічного стану клієнтів (див.: Алексейчик, 1985).

Перш ніж описати інструменти бібліотерапії, наведу приклад клінічного випадку з психологічної практики. Клієнтка звернулася зі скаргами на знижений настрій, апатію, що чергуються із тривожністю. Також вона скаржилася на відчуття загального виснаження, зниження продуктивності, поганий сон та апетит. Окрім вищезгаданих симптомів, у клієнтки були наявні проблеми зі шлунково-кишковим трактом у вигляді метеоризму, нудоти, закрепів, іноді проносів. Лікарі поставили гастроентерологічний діагноз – синдром подразненого кишківника.

Зазначені симптоми проявлялися на піку психотичних симптомів. Зокрема клієнтка це описує такими словами: «Мене нудило, коли мені було або дуже сумно, або сильно тривожилася, або переживала ще один стрес». Лікарі призначили медикаментозне та психотерапевтичне лікування, а згодом було запропоновано бібліотерапію як один з інструментів психотерапії. Для психотерапії ми обрали Біблію, оскільки клієнтка давно хотіла спробувати читати саме її. На момент початку бібліотерапії, клієнтка приймала антидепресанти протягом двох місяців. Був розроблений план допомоги зі сторінками Біблії. Вже за кілька днів, ми спільно почали спостерігати, що результативність комплексного

direction of tapering off. At the same time, even though the client gave up the medication quite quickly, she did not experience withdrawal syndrome. After discontinuing antidepressant treatment, she continued general psychotherapy for another month, concurrently working with bibliotherapy. After discontinuing antidepressant treatment, she continued general psychotherapy for another month, concurrently working with the bibliotherapy method. A follow-up meeting with the client one and a half months after discontinuing antidepressants showed stability in her mental state and alleviation of all symptoms.

The client described in detail the changes observed in her mental and somatic health, and most importantly, what she achieved in personal growth. The influence of bibliotherapy, with the help of reading the Bible, undoubtedly had a successful therapeutic effect.

Taking the general principle of bibliotherapy, when selecting actual material, it is important to consider the age of the client (matching texts to their age capabilities), emotional content (overly emotional and exciting works can provoke intense experiences, potentially amplifying one's emotions to a dangerous extent), traits of a person's character, temperament, and vulnerability (perception of everything that surrounds and one's usual reactions), personal cultural relevance (finding something familiar or close in texts that will resonate and provide support), and intellectual development (too complex texts will not give an effect, on the contrary, they will drive a person further into a corner). The correctness of the choice of text material can be gauged by the client's feedback during discussions of their inner experiences and realizations during psychotherapy sessions.

In the cases of anxiety-depressive disorders, the emphasis should be placed not so much on the analysis of the client's imperfections, but rather on God's love for a human, on God's love for this particular client. Any biblical text should be presented in the context of the development of systemic interaction: past-present-future. The material should be processed through descriptions of the client's reflections, which in-

медикаментозно-психотерапевтичного лікування зростає після додання бібліотерапії. Що важливо, майже всі симптоми нівелювалися за короткий період (два-три тижні), а повне одужання клієнтка відчула вже за місяць планового читання визначених нами біблійних текстів. Клієнтка готова була відмовитися від антидепресантів та навіть загальної психотерапії. Проте така відмова була б ірраціональною оскільки згідно протоколів, «сходження» з антидепресантів має відбуватися через шість місяців за схемою титрування в напрямку зменшення дози. Водночас, попри те, що клієнтка досить швидко відмовилася від ліків, у неї не спостерігався синдром відміни. Після припинення лікування антидепресантами вона продовжувала загальну психотерапію ще один місяць, паралельно працюючи в методі бібліотерапії. Контрольна зустріч з клієнткою через півтора місяці після відмови від антидепресантів, показала стабільність її психічного стану, нівелювання всіх симптомів.

Клієнтка детально описала зміни, що спостерігалися в її психічному та соматичному здоров'ї, і що важливо, чого вона досягла в особистісному зростанні. Вплив бібліотерапії, за допомогою читання Біблії, без сумніву мав успішний лікувальний ефект.

Якщо брати загальний принцип бібліотерапії, то при підборі фактичного матеріалу важливо враховувати вік клієнта (відповідність текстів віковим можливостям), емоційну наповненість (надто емоційні й хвилюючі твори можуть спровокувати тяжкі переживання, тим самим підсилити власні до небезпечної межі), особливості характеру людини, темперамент вразливість (сприйняття всього, що оточує, її звичні реакції), особисту культуральну релевантність (знайти своє/ близьке в текстах, що відгукнеться і зрезонує підтримку), інтелектуальний розвиток (надто складні тексти не дадуть ефекту, радше навпаки заведуть глибше в кут). Правильність вибору текстового



involve the construction of their own system of love: love for oneself, love for others, and love for God. This leads to acceptance of oneself and others as they are, acceptance of them in love and mercy; which in turn reduces anxiety and depressive symptoms in the client, gives them the ability to experience reality from the position of here-and-now and to activate their gratitude for 'what they already have,' and motivates them to continue seeking their own faith, hope, and love.

According to the Christian psychologist N. Syrotych (2015), the use of bibliotherapy requires the psychotherapist not only to know the Word of God but also to have knowledge about the features of the client's age and religious development, methods of spiritual influence and psychological correction, as well as the psychotherapist's openness to God's Love.

матеріалу можна відстежити за фідбеками клієнта під час обговорення його внутрішніх переживань та усвідомлень на сесіях психотерапії.

При тривожно-депресивних розладах важливий акцент має робитися не стільки на аналізі власної недосконалості клієнта, скільки на любові Бога до людини, на любові Бога до цього конкретного клієнта. Будь-який біблійний текст варто подавати у динаміці розвитку системної взаємодії: *м и н у л е - т е п е р і ш н е - м а й б у т н е*. Опрацьовувати матеріал необхідно через описи рефлексій клієнта, що сприяє вибудовуванню його власної системи любові: любові до себе, любові до людей, любові до Бога. Саме це приводить до прийняття себе та інших такими якими вони є, прийняття їх в любові та милосерді, що, в свою чергу, послаблює тривожні та депресивні прояви у клієнта, дарує йому можливість проживати дійсність з позиції *тут-і-тепер*, активізувати в собі вдячність за «те що вже маю» і мотивує до подальшого пошуку своєї віри, надії, любові.

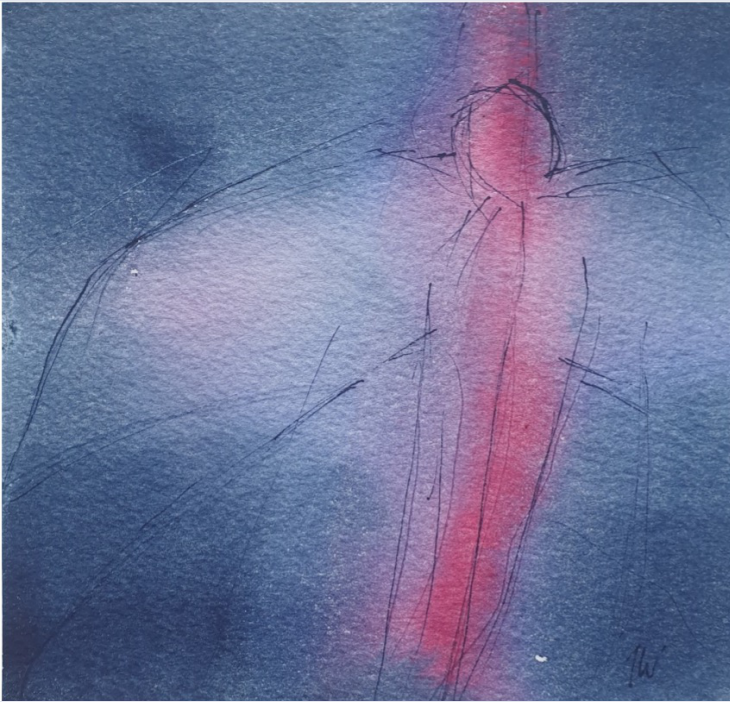
Використання бібліотерапії, на думку християнського психолога Н. Сиротич (2015), вимагає від психотерапевта не лише знання Слова Божого, але й володіння знаннями щодо особливостей вікового та релігійного розвитку клієнта, методами духовного впливу та психологічної корекції, а ще – відкритістю самого психотерапевта на Божу Любов.

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**Angels 2**



**Angels 3**



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[www.plazacounselingservices.com](http://www.plazacounselingservices.com)

[www.traumaclinikinternational.com](http://www.traumaclinikinternational.com)

**Former contribution in our eJournal by Esly you can see her:**

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/18/#p=46>

## Comment to

### **“More Practical Orientated Bibliotherapy as love therapy in the comprehensive treatment of anxiety-depressive disorders”**

A friend from the USA, who also read this article by Khrystyna, wrote to me that she is grateful for her own transformative experiences with bibliotherapy.

She would like to see more collaboration between mental health professionals and community workers. That's why she appreciates this contribution from Khrystyna.

I summarize my comment with the following points:

1. Beautiful proposal! The Word of God is so amazing! The idea that just reading it can heal is simple and true, but rarely used enough.
2. A more thorough example would have been helpful: which Scriptures did she use specifically with the case she described?

3. A step-by-step process of the more common passages used, and how it was introduced and developed with the client – or with any client – would have made this paper even more valuable.
4. The paper puts forth such a wonderful way of working that the reader remains with the curiosity of: how could I implement this with my clients?

Personally, I also am a proponent of group work, as it is so therapeutic, and wonder if this could be used in groups in order to scale, and tend to more people, like I did with the PIPA Program and its sister, the Pastoral PIPA Program, that explains trauma from a Biblical perspective. In fact, I trained 186 therapists in Poland and Ukraine last year in the secular PIPA Program (the group exercises are the same) online so they could implement them



Finally accommodates: The Hut



**Werner May  
(Germany)**

Werner May (Germany) was the senior chairman of the IGNIS Institute for Christian Psychology in Kitzingen for more than 25 years ([www.ignis.de](http://www.ignis.de)). As a teacher his main interest was in basic questions of Christian Psychology and in counselling of foster families. He also helped to build up the Institute for Christian Psychology, Education and Therapy in Switzerland ([www.icp.ch](http://www.icp.ch)). Now he is the chairman of the European Movement for Christian Anthropology, Psychology and Therapy ([www.emcapp.eu](http://www.emcapp.eu)) and publishes the free e-journal Christian Psychology Around The World (<https://emcapp.ignis.de/>). Werner has been married to Agnes for now 50 years. They live in Würzburg, Germany, and have six adult children.

**Former articles by Werner available here:**

- <https://emcapp.ignis.de/20/#p=71>
- <https://emcapp.ignis.de/19/#p=56>
- <https://emcapp.ignis.de/18/#p=53>
- <https://emcapp.ignis.de/17/#p=34>
- <https://emcapp.ignis.de/16/#p=37>
- <https://emcapp.ignis.de/15/>
- <https://emcapp.ignis.de/12/#p=29>
- <https://emcapp.ignis.de/2/>

## The Agape Questionnaire for Self-reflection

Questionnaires on personality traits can be helpful if I do not see them as a definitive statement ("This is who I am!"), but as a more or less focused snapshot that gives me ideas for further reflection and possibly also for seeking dialogue with others.

Over 10 years ago, we developed an Agape questionnaire for self-reflection, which I would like to present here. We formulated questions in eight categories.

1. Being for the other: Being for the other means affirming the existence of the other, their individuality, being willing to live for the other with the intention of improving the other's situation. "It is good that you exist."
2. Helping: Helping means supporting the other person and wanting to encourage them.
3. Loving selflessly: Love willingly puts itself on the sidelines, is completely centred on the other, but is combined with empathy and perspective-taking.

4. Self-denial: Self-denial goes beyond the usual norms of social behaviour, has a capacity for renunciation while giving something of oneself, and no longer takes place within the framework of professional activity.
5. Giving time: Giving time not only means being ready and present at the right moment, but also shows qualities such as constancy, i.e. loyalty, consistency and perseverance.
6. Pro-feelings in relationships: Pro-feelings are feelings of compassion, of being intimately touched, involved and addressed.
7. Setting boundaries: Within the human relationship reality, an important learning process in love is to accept the limits of the human ability to love and to set limits in and out of love.
8. Love as a chance happening: The essence of agape cannot be self-generated, but goes beyond our own efforts, as it is in fact mainly grace. It comes to us, it happens to us.

# The Agape Questionnaire

## Instructions:

Please indicate the extent to which the individual behaviour patterns, feelings or attitudes listed below apply or do not apply to you.

The further to the left you place the cross, the less the statement applies to you.

Here, "0" means that the statement is absolutely wrong in every respect, while "10" means that the statement is absolutely true in every respect.

The "9" means that the statement is generally completely true and the "1" means that the statement is generally completely wrong.

The "4", "5" and "6" denote average assessments, with the "4" tending to indicate wrong and the "6" tending to indicate true.

	Absolutely wrong	Absolutely true
1. Even when we are in conflict with each other, I let the other person know that they are valuable in my eyes.	<input type="text" value="0"/> <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> <input type="text" value="10"/>	
2. I often help actively and without hesitation.	<input type="text" value="0"/> <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> <input type="text" value="10"/>	
3. I am always ready to love the other person anew, even if they do not show me love.	<input type="text" value="0"/> <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> <input type="text" value="10"/>	
4. I am prepared to love another person even if it really costs me something personally.	<input type="text" value="0"/> <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> <input type="text" value="10"/>	
5. My time is given to me to love and be loved.	<input type="text" value="0"/> <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> <input type="text" value="10"/>	
6. If I can meet a person with heart-felt warmth, I am happy.	<input type="text" value="0"/> <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> <input type="text" value="10"/>	
7. It is easy for me to say no out of love.	<input type="text" value="0"/> <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> <input type="text" value="10"/>	
8. In the course of my life, I have realised that I cannot create love myself, but can only receive it as a gift.	<input type="text" value="0"/> <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> <input type="text" value="10"/>	
9. Genuine empathy comes easily to me when meeting others.	<input type="text" value="0"/> <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> <input type="text" value="10"/>	
10. I am very grateful and happy that I have been able to experience a lot of help and support myself.	<input type="text" value="0"/> <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> <input type="text" value="10"/>	
11. I am always prepared to interrupt important work if someone needs me.	<input type="text" value="0"/> <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> <input type="text" value="10"/>	
12. If the other person doesn't feel well, that really affects me too.	<input type="text" value="0"/> <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> <input type="text" value="10"/>	
13. I spend a lot of time helping others.	<input type="text" value="0"/> <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> <input type="text" value="10"/>	
14. I enjoy being with people.	<input type="text" value="0"/> <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> <input type="text" value="10"/>	
15. When I set boundaries for someone else, I don't feel guilty.	<input type="text" value="0"/> <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> <input type="text" value="10"/>	
16. I have found that God hears me when I ask Him to give me love for a particular person.	<input type="text" value="0"/> <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> <input type="text" value="10"/>	
17. I never say anything derogatory about another person - not even to third parties.	<input type="text" value="0"/> <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> <input type="text" value="10"/>	
18. I encourage others in their gifts.	<input type="text" value="0"/> <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> <input type="text" value="10"/>	
19. I put my own interests and needs aside for the sake of others.	<input type="text" value="0"/> <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/> <input type="text" value="3"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="7"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> <input type="text" value="10"/>	

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 20. I am prepared to forego my own wishes if I sense that the other person needs me in particular.                          | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 21. I like to take time for another person.   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 22. I am always willing to make someone else happy with small gifts.  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 23. If someone is harming themselves, I feel free to tell them that.  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 24. Nothing can separate me from the love of God.   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 25. It is difficult for me to persuade a person to do something that might harm them.                                       | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 26. I am happy to become one with someone else's cause and then support them actively.                                      | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 27. I am willing to do things for others without gaining anything personally.   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 28. I am prepared to endure long-term suffering for the sake of others.   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 29. Time-consuming relationships are not too strenuous for me.  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 30. I enjoy helping others.   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 31. If something becomes too much for me, I can say no firmly.  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 32. Love is a gift from God that I can only ask for and receive, but not possess.   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 33. I find people interesting, no matter who they are.  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 34. When another person confides in me, I support them in overcoming their problems.  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 35. I am able to show genuine interest in another person's preferences, even if I am not interested in these things myself. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 36. I am prepared to love another person even if I have to give up my own plans.  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 37. I am prepared to give my time for the other person by taking the initiative to make contact.                            | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 38. I enjoy seeing friends again.   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 39. I have learnt to set boundaries.  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 40. Since entering into a living relationship with God, I have been able to love people I used to find unappealing.         | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Please evaluate the questionnaire yourself by noting the number you have ticked to the left of the question number on the following evaluation sheet.

Then calculate the total in each of the 8 categories.

- Where is this highest, where is it lowest?
- Concentrate mainly on your good categories:
- What are the two highest?
- How can I get even better at this?

And then make a point of thinking about these "answers" from time to time. What becomes clear to you?

Category	Question	Evaluation
Cat1 <b>Being for the other</b>	1	
	9	
	17	
	25	
	33	
Sum		
Cat 2 <b>Helping</b>	2	
	10	
	18	
	26	
	34	
Sum		
Cat 3 <b>Loving selflessly</b>	3	
	11	
	19	
	27	
	35	
Sum		
Cat 4 <b>Self-denial</b>	4	
	12	
	20	
	28	
	36	
Sum		
Cat 5 <b>Giving time</b>	5	
	13	
	21	
	29	
	37	
Sum		
Cat 6 <b>Pro-feelings in relationships</b>	6	
	14	
	22	
	30	
	38	
Sum		
Cat 7 <b>Setting boundaries</b>	7	
	15	
	23	
	31	
	39	
Sum		
Cat 8 <b>Love as a chance happening</b>	8	
	16	
	24	
	32	
	40	
Sum		

## Self-Reflection (Reflection)

Back then, I filled out this Agape Questionnaire for self-reflection in order to identify my strengths and weaknesses as my prerequisites for loving.

My strengths, according to the results, seemed to lie in experiencing myself as loved and being fundamentally in favour of other people.

My weakness, on the other hand, was clearly that I made no time available for love, no time that loving might cost me.

I was happy that my strength was to experience myself as loved.

I looked back with wonder and gratitude on a decades-long process of healing and change that had turned a disorientated and socially anxious young person into a humorous adult who was open to other people. It's a miracle for me when I think back to my shame about the fact that I even exist and remember my self-rejection.

This self-affirmation encourages me not to avoid loving, but to expect more, to encounter love in return and not rejection. I am loved by others much more than I think!

Yes, if it weren't for this lack of time!

Love is the highest thing! This is what the New Testament tells us. And I do not have enough time for that! Can you believe that?

I imagine I am not the only one who feels this way.

Others will find their strengths and limitations in other aspects of loving.

We know that in following Jesus, nothing should happen without love.

"Pursue love." 1 Co 14:1<sup>[1]</sup>

We know this, we want to, and we should be succeeding even better with all these years of discipleship.



## Two experience reports with the Agape Questionnaire

"The Agape Questionnaire made it clear to me once again that the strengths of my love are directly connected to the weaknesses of my love. My strengths of "being for others" and "loving selflessly" enable me to empathise with other people, to interrupt my work when I'm needed and to be able to put my own needs to one side. I am grateful for that! My love is characterised by the fact that I like to help and am able to act in crisis or problem situations. At the same time, however, I also notice that I feel the need to remain "vigilant" about my weak point of love: "setting boundaries". This under-trained part of my love causes me to neglect myself again and again. This sometimes manifests itself in time stress because I have said yes too often instead of sticking to my tasks. Or sometimes I get annoyed or exhausted and realise that I haven't been taking enough care of myself (self-love).

As a learning exercise, therefore, I want to work on assuring myself of the statement in point 24 of the Questionnaire: "Nothing can separate me from the love of God." How do I do this? I don't know yet. However, one thing has rarely let me down in the past: God's assurances that "You are good enough for me"; "You don't have to prove yourself". These assurances strengthen me, fill me with love, which I need for my strengths and weaknesses in love."

"I found the Questionnaire to be profound and not always comfortable. I have my own ideas about how I would like to be. After a few questions, my inner voice spoke up: 'Are you really like that, is that honest? Wouldn't it be better for people who know me well to answer these questions?' Questions that I once casually answered with " Absolutely right" came back to me a few questions later, especially in question 5. Absolutely right - but is that how I live my everyday life? What was going on recently when..."

As I went on, I suspected that one category would probably not go my way.

As a result, I scored the most points in category 8 (love as a chance happening) followed by category 6 (pro-feelings in relationships).

The positive experiences in these areas are bearing fruit and have changed me and my behaviour.

I scored the lowest in category 5. It's true, I often feel under time pressure and feel I have to make the most of my time. After all, I also need time for myself. And then I find myself scrolling through social media or playing a word search game on my mobile phone... These rob my time robbers and I open the door to them. Even though I think social media are in themselves a great invention and can really be put to good use. But, as I say, they are not just that...

For me, this is the conclusion: I want to make even more use of the time given to me to live and love (question 5). Not selfishly, yet doing more than simply presenting people with lovingly wrapped gifts. I want to bring time with me. After all, it was lovingly given to me, as the high score in category 8 clearly shows. What did and does me good and fulfils me will also make my fellow human beings happy. If at some point they feel it's becoming too much of a good thing, they can honestly say so."



The City

## Der Agape-Fragebogen für die Selbstreflexion

Fragebögen zu Persönlichkeitsmerkmalen können dann eine Hilfe sein, wenn ich sie nicht als Festschreibung betrachte („So bin ich!“), sondern als mehr oder weniger scharfe Momentaufnahme, die mir Anregungen gibt, weiter darüber nachzudenken, eventuell auch das Gespräch mit anderen zu suchen.

Vor über 10 Jahren haben wir zur Selbstreflexion einen Agape-Fragebogen entwickelt, den ich hier vorstellen möchte. Zu acht Kategorien haben wir darin Fragen formuliert.

1. Für den anderen sein: Für-den anderen sein meint, die Existenz des anderen, seine Individualität bejahen, bereit sein, für den anderen zu leben, mit der Absicht, die Lage des anderen zu verbessern. „Es ist gut, dass es dich gibt.“
2. Helfen: Helfen, das meint, den anderen unterstützen und ihn fördern wollen.
3. Selbstlos Lieben: Die Liebe stellt sich selbst zurück, ist ganz auf den anderen bezogen, aber verbunden mit Einfühlungsvermögen und Perspektivenübernahme.
4. Selbstverleugnung: Selbstverleugnung geht über die üblichen Normen sozialen Handelns hinaus, verzichtet und gibt etwas von sich her und spielt sich nicht mehr im Rahmen professionellen Handelns ab.
5. Zeit geben: Zeit geben, bedeutet nicht nur im richtigen Moment auch bereit und präsent zu sein, sondern zeigt auch Eigenschaften wie Verweilen können, also Treue, Beständigkeit und Ausdauer.
6. ProGefühle in Beziehungen: ProGefühle sind Gefühle des Erbarmens, des innigen Berührt-, Beteiligt- und Angesprochenseins.
7. Grenzen setzen: Innerhalb der menschlichen Beziehung Realität besteht ein wichtiger Lernvorgang der Liebe darin, die Grenzen der menschlichen Liebesfähigkeit zu akzeptieren und in und aus Liebe Grenzen zu setzen.
8. 8. Liebe als Widerfahrnis: Das Eigentliche der Agape ist nicht machbar, sondern geht über den eigenen Einsatz hinaus, da sie vielmehr Gnade ist. Sie fällt uns zu, sie widerfährt uns.

## Der Agape-Fragebogen

### Instruktionen:

Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit die einzelnen Verhaltensmuster, Gefühle oder Einstellungen, die im Folgenden aufgeführt sind, auf Sie zutreffen oder nicht zutreffen.

Je weiter links Sie ankreuzen, desto weniger trifft die Aussage auf Sie zu.

Dabei bedeutet „0“, dass die Aussage absolut und in jeder Hinsicht unzutreffend ist, während die „10“ bedeutet, dass die Aussage absolut und in jeder Hinsicht zutreffend ist.

Die „9“ bedeutet, dass die Aussage im Allgemeinen voll und ganz zutrifft, und die „1“ bedeutet, dass die Aussage im Allgemeinen voll und ganz nicht zutrifft.

Die „4“, die „5“ und die „6“ bezeichnen mittlere Einschätzungen, wobei die „4“ eher Nichtzutreffen und die „6“ eher Zutreffen anzeigt.

1. Selbst wenn wir miteinander in Konflikt stehen, gebe ich dem anderen zu verstehen, dass er in meinen Augen wertgeachtet ist.
2. Ich helfe oft tatkräftig und ohne zu zögern.
3. Ich bin immer wieder neu bereit, den anderen zu lieben, auch wenn er mir keine Liebe erweist.
4. Ich bin auch dann bereit, einen anderen zu lieben, wenn es mich persönlich echt etwas kostet.
5. Meine Zeit ist mir gegeben um zu lieben und geliebt zu werden.
6. Wenn ich einem Menschen von Herzen begegnen kann, dann werde ich froh.
7. Es fällt mir leicht, aus Liebe nein zu sagen.
8. Mir ist im Laufe meines Lebens bewusst geworden, dass ich Liebe nicht selber machen, sondern nur als Geschenk empfangen kann.
9. Echtes Einfühlungsvermögen fällt mir in einer menschlichen Begegnung leicht.
10. Ich empfinde sehr viel Dank und Freude darüber, dass ich selber viel Hilfe und Unterstützung erfahren durfte.
11. Ich bin stets bereit, eine wichtige Arbeit zu unterbrechen, wenn mich ein Mensch gerade braucht.
12. Wenn der andere sich nicht wohl fühlt, dann nimmt mich das selbst sehr mit.
13. Ich verwende sehr viel Zeit, um anderen zu helfen.
14. Ich bin gerne mit Menschen zusammen.
15. Wenn ich einem anderen Grenzen setze, dann habe ich keine Schuldgefühle.
16. Ich habe die Erfahrung gemacht, dass Gott mich erhört, wenn ich Ihn bitte, mir Liebe für einen bestimmten Menschen zu schenken.
17. Ich spreche niemals etwas Abwertendes über einen anderen – auch nicht gegenüber dritten.
18. Ich fördere andere in ihren Gaben.
19. Eigene Interessen und Bedürfnisse stelle ich um eines anderen willen zurück.

Absolut falsch

absolut richtig

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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20. Ich bin bereit, auf meine Wünsche zu verzichten, wenn ich spüre: der andere braucht jetzt gerade mich.
21. Ich nehme mir gerne Zeit für einen anderen.
22. Ich bin bereit einen anderen immer wieder mit kleinen Geschenken zu erfreuen.
23. Wenn sich jemand selber schadet, kann ich ihm das auch sagen.
24. Nichts kann mich von der Liebe Gottes scheiden.
25. Es fällt mir schwer, einen Menschen zu etwas zu bewegen, was ihn vielleicht schaden könnte.
26. Ich bin gerne bereit, mich mit der Sache eines anderen eins zu machen und ihn dann zu unterstützen.
27. Ich bin bereit, etwas für einen anderen zu tun, ohne dass ich persönlich etwas davon habe.
28. Ich bin bereit langfristiges Leiden, um des anderen willen, mit ihm durchzustehen.
29. Zeitaufwendige Beziehungen sind mir nicht zu anstrengend.
30. Es bereitet mir Freude, anderen zu helfen.
31. Wenn mir etwas zu viel wird, kann ich klar nein sagen.
32. Liebe ist eine Gabe Gottes, die ich nur erbitten und empfangen, aber nicht besitzen kann.
33. Ich finde Menschen interessant, egal wer sie sind.
34. Wenn sich mir ein anderer Mensch anvertraut, unterstütze ich ihn in der Überwindung seiner Probleme.
35. Es gelingt mir, echtes Interesse für die Vorlieben eines anderen zu zeigen, auch wenn mich selbst diese Dinge nicht interessieren.
36. Ich bin auch dann bereit, einen anderen zu lieben, wenn ich meine eigenen Pläne aufgeben muss.
37. Ich bin bereit, für den anderen meine Zeit zu geben, indem ich von mir aus den Kontakt suche.
38. Bekannte wieder zu sehen, bereitet mir Freude.
39. Ich habe gelernt, Grenzen zu setzen.
40. Seit ich in einer lebendigen Gottesbeziehung stehe, kann ich auch die Menschen lieben, die ich früher unsympathisch fand.

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Bitte werten Sie den Fragebogen selber aus, indem Sie auf den folgenden Auswertungsbogen links neben der Nummer der Frage Ihre angekreuzte Zahl notieren.

Bilden Sie dann die Summe in jeder der 8 Kategorien.

- Wo ist diese am höchsten, wo am niedrigsten?
- Konzentriere dich vor allem auf deine guten Kategorien:
- Was sind die zwei höchsten?
- Wie kann ich da noch besser werden?

Und nun nehme sie sich öfters mal Zeit über diese „Antworten“ nachzudenken. Was wird Ihnen dabei deutlich?

Kategorie	Frage	Bewertungszahl
CKat1 <b>Für den anderen sein</b>	1	
	9	
	17	
	25	
	33	
		Summe
Kat 2 <b>Helfen</b>	2	
	10	
	18	
	26	
	34	
		Summe
Kat 3 <b>Selbstlos Lieben</b>	3	
	11	
	19	
	27	
	35	
		Summe
Kat 4 <b>Selbstverleug nung</b>	4	
	12	
	20	
	28	
	36	
		Summe
Kat 5 <b>Zeit geben</b>	5	
	13	
	21	
	29	
	37	
		Summe
Kat 6 <b>ProGefühle in Beziehungen</b>	6	
	14	
	22	
	30	
	38	
		Summe
Kat 7 <b>Grenzen setzen</b>	7	
	15	
	23	
	31	
	39	
		Summe
Kat 8 <b>Liebe als Widerfahrnis</b>	8	
	16	
	24	
	32	
	40	
		Summe

## Selbstflexion (Reflexion)

Damals habe ich dann selbst diese Agape-Fragebogen zur Selbstreflexion ausgefüllt, um meine Stärken und meine Schwächen als meine Voraussetzungen fürs Lieben aufzuspüren.

Meine Stärken, so das Ergebnis, schienen darin zu liegen, mich selbst als geliebt zu erleben und grundsätzlich für andere Menschen zu sein.

Meine Schwachstelle dagegen war eindeutig, dass ich keine Zeit bereitstellte, um zu lieben, keine Zeit, die mich das Lieben kosten könnte.

Ich freute mich, dass es meine Stärke sein sollte, mich als geliebt zu erleben.

Ich schaute dabei staunend und dankbar auf einen jahrzehntelangen Heilungs- und Veränderungsprozess zurück, der aus einem orientierungslosen und sozial ängstlichen jungen Menschen einen humorvollen, anderen Menschen zugewandten Erwachsenen gemacht hatte. Für mich ein Wunder, wenn ich an meine Scham darüber denke, dass es mich überhaupt gibt, und mich an meine Selbstablehnung erinnere.

Diese Selbstbejahung ermutigt mich, dem Lieben nicht auszuweichen, sondern mehr zu erwarten, im eigenen Lieben auf Gegenliebe zu stoßen und nicht auf Ablehnung. Ich bin viel mehr von anderen geliebt, als ich denke!

Ja, wenn da nicht zusätzlich noch dieser Zeitmangel wäre!

Die Liebe ist das Höchste! So sagt es uns das Neue Testament. Und dafür habe ich nicht genügend Zeit! Das muss man sich mal vorstellen!

Ich denke mir, ich bin nicht der Einzige, dem es so geht.

Andere werden bei anderen Aspekten des Liebens ihre Stärken und Begrenzungen finden.

Wir wissen, dass in der Nachfolge Jesu nichts ohne Liebe geschehen soll. „Strebt nach der Liebe.“ 1.Ko 14,1 („Strebt nach der Liebe.“ 1.Ko 14,1, das griechische Wort für „streben“ können wir auch besser ausdrücken mit „ganz scharf sein auf“.)

Das wissen wir, das wollen wir, uns es soll uns mit all den Jahren der Nachfolge noch besser gelingen.

## Zwei weitere Erfahrungen mit dem Agape-Fragebogen

„Für mich ist über den Agape-Fragebogen nochmal deutlich geworden, dass die Stärken meiner Liebe direkt mit den Schwachstellen meiner Liebe in Verbindung stehen. Meine Stärken „Für den anderen sein“, „Selbstlos Lieben“ befähigen mich, mich in andere Menschen hineinzufühlen, meine Arbeit zu unterbrechen, wenn ich gebraucht werde, und fähig zu sein, eigene Bedürfnisse hintenanzustellen. Darüber bin ich dankbar! Zeichnet meine Liebe doch aus, dass ich gerne helfe und in der Lage bin, in Krisen- oder Problemsituationen zu handeln. Gleichzeitig bemerke ich bei mir aber auch das Gefühl der Notwendigkeit, „wachsam“ über meine Schwachstelle der Liebe „Grenzen setzen“ zu bleiben. Über diesen untertrainierten Teil meiner Liebe bringe ich mich immer wieder dazu, mich zu vernachlässigen. Dies zeigt sich manchmal darin, unter zeitlichen Stress zu kommen, weil ich zu oft Ja gesagt habe, statt an meinen Aufgaben dran zu bleiben. Oder auch mal darin, dass ich genervt oder ausgelaugt bin und daran merke, dass ich zu wenig für mich (Selbstliebe) da gewesen bin. Als Lernübung nehme ich darum mit, mich immer wieder der Aussage aus Nr.24 des Fragebogens zu vergewissern: „Nichts kann mich trennen von der Lieben Gottes.“ Wie ich das mache? Das weiß ich noch nicht. Eines hat mich in der Vergangenheit aber selten im Stich gelassen: die Zusagen Gottes „Du genügst mir“ – „Du musst dich nicht beweisen“. Diese Zusagen stärken mich, füllen mich mit Liebe, die ich brauche für meine Liebesstärken und Liebeschwächen.“

„Ich empfand den Fragebogen als tiefgehend und nicht immer angenehm. Ich habe so meine Vorstellungen, wie ich gern sein möchte. Nach einigen Fragen regte sich meine innere Stimme: Bist Du wirklich so, ist das ehrlich? Sollten nicht besser Menschen diese Fragen beantworten, die mich gut kennen? Fragen, die ich mal locker mit „absolut richtig“ beantwortete, kamen einige Fragen später wieder in mir auf, das ging mir insbesondere in Frage 5 so. Absolut richtig - aber lebe ich das so im Alltag? Wie war das denn kürzlich, als...

Zwischendurch erahnte ich, dass eine Kategorie wohl nicht so nach meinem Wunsch abschneiden würde.

Im Ergebnis erreichte ich die meisten Punkte in Kategorie 8 (Liebe als Widerfahrnis) gefolgt von Kategorie 6 (ProGefühle in Beziehungen).

Die positiven Erfahrungen in diesen Bereichen tragen Früchte und haben mich und mein Verhalten verändert.

In Kategorie 5 habe ich die niedrigste Punktzahl erreicht. Es stimmt, ich fühle mich oft unter Zeitdruck und meine, die Zeit ausnutzen zu müssen. Schließlich brauche ich ja auch noch Zeit für mich selbst. Und dann ertappe ich mich, dass ich mal kurz durch die Social Media scrolle oder ein Wortsuchspiel auf dem Handy mache... Das sind Zeiträuber, denen ich die Türen öffne. Obgleich ich Social Media an sich für eine tolle Erfindung halte, die sich wirklich sinnvoll nutzen lässt. Aber eben nicht nur...

Für mich ist das Fazit: Ich möchte die gegebene Zeit zu leben und zu lieben (Frage 5) noch mehr nutzen. Nicht eigennützig, sondern indem ich Menschen nicht nur gerne mit liebevoll verpackten kleinen Geschenken begegne. Ich möchte Zeit mitbringen. Schließlich wurde sie mir selbst liebevoll geschenkt, die hohe Punktzahl in Kategorie 8 belegt es deutlich. Was mir gut tat und tut und mich erfüllt, das wird auch meine Mitmenschen freuen. Wenn es ihnen irgendwann zu viel des Guten wird, dann dürfen sie es auch ehrlich sagen.“



0-Antiphone: The Key of David





**Leena Junnila  
(Finland)**

Leena Junnila is Christian counsellor in Lohja Finland. She has worked also as trainer in Christian counselling school first in Lohja and since 2019 at Kalajoki Christian College. She is already retired but goes on working as speaker and teacher in Christian events and courses when needed. She is a board member in ACC Finland.

## Comment to “The Agape Questionnaire for Self-reflection”

This Agape Questionnaire deals with one part about The Great Commandment: "You shall love The Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself." As God has first loved us with his Agape love, we are able to love our neighbor (1. John 4: 19-21). This dependence on God has been noted well in this question set. My comments pay also attention to the fact that the Christian education often forgets how difficult it is for a fallen person to accept God's love, which, however, is an absolute prerequisite for the ability to love God and the neighbor.

The AQ is a good instrument for any Christian's self-reflection when a person wants to evaluate his/her own willingness to show divine love to other people. The questions and their eight categories broaden the idea of all the things that the expression of love includes in practice and the way how the person filling in the form thinks to have succeeded there. I would also like to recommend its use as discussion basis e.g. with a husband and a wife, family members, a friend, a religious guide or sometimes also with a Christian therapist. With a therapist, in the first place, when a client thinks

about religious questions and if s/he has problems e.g. in setting boundaries or a severe image of God. Some additional questions could, however, be needed to further the therapy.

A Christian therapist can also use this battery by choosing for his/her use some questions s/he evaluates to be good for his/her own client. Anyway, it is very important that the therapist and the client consider and talk over the backgrounds and the significance of the replies.

The last two ones of the AQ's eight question categories: 7. Setting boundaries and 8. Love as a chance happening arouse additional questions and need for adjustments in my opinion. Category 7 has questions that concern setting boundaries for "another person's benefit" (7 and 23) and such questions that concern setting boundaries for "a person's own benefit" i.e. because of his/her own resources (3.) and a couple of questions that are too unclear to draw conclusions whether the boundaries are needed for oneself or the other person (15 and 39).

In my opinion, it would be good to separate these questions and make two groups of them: a) is it easy or difficult for the person filling in the form to set boundaries for another person in general. b) is it easy or difficult for the person filling in the form to set boundaries when it would be necessary to take care of his/her own sufficient resources. Category 8 (love as a chance happening) describes love in the first place as God's gift for another person. There is nothing blameful there but I would like to have additional questions to describe ways to accept God's love for the person filling in the form (God's love to him/herself). This is because God's love to me is the spring that enables me to give love to other people (Ps. 23:5). If I am unable to accept God's love and if I don't know my own value, I end up helping other people with my own strength. Then I might become exhausted or want to be alone because I think that I don't have anything to give.

The second part of Question 5 brings out this subject shortly, but more attention should be paid to it in my opinion. Question 8 describes the gift nature of love but it also has the possibility to pass the acceptance of a gift to oneself. Question 24 may be planned to describe how the person filling in the form experiences the acceptance of love from God to him/herself.

The problems here may, however, be that the statement has been taken directly from the Bible and "A good Christian" replies to the question automatically "correctly" (9-10) without debating profoundly how it really corresponds to his/her own experiences. It is embarrassing to admit that my experience does not correspond to the Bible's word.

As the therapist of Christian people, I often hear how the client talks about the pain that is caused when his/her wife/husband or parent is willing to help people outside the family without saving time and effort, but s/he does not notice the needs of his/her own family members. It would be good to include this subject in the form, too.

In addition, helping motives are a significant theme that could be dealt with, too, perhaps. If a law, a feeling of guilt and/or rejection of oneself are the motives for helping and giving, it is questionable whether the work is full of blessing. Many people help other people without becoming aware of the fact that it is actually an escape from his/her own pain and longing for those very things s/he hurries to give to other people. I myself have done that many years, hopefully not so much anymore.



Flamingos



**Jonathan P. Badgett  
(USA)**

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Former contribution in our eJournal by Jonathan you can see her:  
<https://emcapp.ignis.de/18/#p=34>

## Enduring all Things: Reflections on the Benefits of Long-Term Christian Psychotherapy

*Love . . . endures all things.*  
1 Corinthians 13:7

As a pastoral counselor and caregiver, I enjoy certain luxuries. For one, since I don't receive any income (1) from my clients—I call them "counselees" to avoid transactional language—I am free to set a flexible psychotherapeutic agenda. Not only can financial factors muddy the relational waters of the therapeutic alliance, they also pressurize the timeline. Time means money for anyone with limited means. Yet, time is also a crucial aspect of the healing process. I'm all for strategic, short-term solutions, when appropriate.<sup>2</sup> Profound brokenness, on the other hand, takes longer to heal; profoundly broken people require long-term care. It's a luxury I enjoy to have walked alongside the wounded for, in some cases, well over a decade of their lives and mine. With the pressures of finances removed—no bank accounts straining to keep up, no insurance companies impatiently tapping their corporate foot for us to hurry up, move along, fix the problem, whatever that might mean—we have taken the time we needed. Looking back, I see how we have been learning together to apply the

apostle's exhortation, "Love . . . endures all things" (1 Cor 13:7, NET). What follows are my reflections on one case illustrating the benefits of long-term psychotherapy.

### **Liza's Story**

Like most of my counselees, Liza (3) is a survivor of interpersonal trauma. Her story of brokenness, no less heartbreaking for its familiar profile, begins in early childhood. She was groomed and repeatedly raped from a very young age by a trusted family member. Overlooked by distracted parents too busy and preoccupied with five younger children, Liza learned to carry her dark secret alone. Dissociation allowed her to carry on functioning even as a surrogate parent to her siblings despite the psychological pain she silently carried. Her mind sheltered her from conscious awareness by burying the memories of what happened in a deep pit of forgetfulness. Eventually, not even Liza could recall what she'd tucked away in dark reaches. It was hidden from everyone. As with so many young trauma survivors, Liza endured and survived her trauma—alone.

Years passed. Now a young woman and having long since lost any conscious connection to her history of trauma, Liza often wondered why she struggled so much with feelings of overwhelming anxiety and shame. Marriage, it seemed, was the best path down which she believed she'd find the love and acceptance she had never felt. Things were going well with the wedding plans until Liza and her fiancé discovered she was pregnant. Her family was unexpectedly supportive. His family became angry and caustic. Their religious mores offended, their aspirations for their son now in jeopardy, they demanded the two immediately break it off. Over her desperate pleas and tears, Liza's fiancé abandoned her and their unborn child.

Devastated, her trust shattered, Liza would never again countenance a suitor's advances. She determined to raise her daughter alone, if need be. Since no man could be trusted, it would be the two of them together against a world of unsafe men.

Thankfully, her family rallied around the pair. To the degree they were able, her parents supported Liza and their eldest grandchild. Still, there would be more pain to come. Since no one knew of his crimes against Liza, her childhood abuser was free to come back into the picture. True, Liza never felt safe around him, but neither did she know the reasons why. The summer the whole family gathered for a reunion, Liza made it a point to avoid him as much as she could manage. Yet, one night, he drunkenly forced his way into her room and raped her again. Years later in therapy, Liza would recall being paralyzed as it happened—frozen, helpless to resist him. The whole time she could hear a child's voice whispering in her head, "Not again .

. . not again." Only as we worked our way through layers of dissociative defenses, would she begin to grasp what it all meant.

When he raped her that night, Liza's nine year-old daughter was sleeping next to her in the same bed. At some point she woke up and, confused by what she was seeing, called out to her mother. Liza, lost in a dissociative fugue, failed

to respond. Whether due to his drunkenness or a paroxysm of sexual mania, he was shocked when a young girl shoved him off of her mother and yelled for him to stop. He scuttled from the room as Liza shook herself free of her fugue state and, weeping, clung tight to her daughter. Remarkably, though her daughter reported what she'd seen to dreary-eyed family members awakened by her cry, no one called the police. No one did anything. Liza's abuser was never charged with a crime. The family brushed the whole thing under the rug. No one spoke of it again. History, for Liza, had repeated itself, only worse. Now they knew she was raped, yet they did nothing. That traumatized child sheltering deep within Liza now had confirmation of what she'd believed all along: she was alone.

Liza is now in her sixties and a grandmother. Over the intervening years, she has twice been diagnosed with cancer. Today, mercifully, she is in remission. At some point along the way, she suffered a severe neurological breakdown, after which she had to learn to walk and talk again. She's been declared medically disabled, though she gets around well with help. Liza's daughter was her whole world until she got married and moved several states away. Her husband can be demanding and domineering, everything that triggers Liza's traumatized past. The frequent turbulence between mother and daughter stems from his bullying of Liza. As with her parents when she was young, so it became with her daughter when she'd grown up: Liza's family doesn't see her pain. Desperate, alone, and convinced it must all be her fault, Liza came for therapy unaware of all the good God had in store for her.

### **Liza's Need**

Christ offers Liza a home in him. He was her refuge from the pain of traumatic abuse.

He is her healing from toxic shame and self-loathing. Where others have abandoned and betrayed her, his arms welcome her into intimate embrace. With him, she is never alone. He sees her pain; his healing touch is real. Nevertheless, Liza needs to experience Christ's redemp-

tive agenda—his careful work of soul restoration—over time and in relationship. Liza’s psychopathology—her fragmented awareness of a traumatized past, her negligible agentic capacity, and her paralyzing self-loathing—stem from aversive relational experiences. The dearth of affirming support from her family of origin only compounded her sense of isolation and helplessness. Nobody knew then. When they did find out something was wrong, they still did nothing. Her silent cries went unheard, her hidden pain unseen, for literally decades. She knows God is with her, for her, but her experiences wage war with her faith. Liza believes, but she needs help for her unbelief. She needs someone who will walk alongside her and not leave when life gets messy. She needs a love that endures all things.

### **Let Love Endure**

Paul’s love poem in I Corinthians 13 is more often heard at weddings than in any other context these days. It’s worth remembering, however, that he’s writing to a church, not a couple. His letter is for all believers, not just wives- and husbands-to-be. What he says, we all need to hear. Relationships between believers, according to the apostle, should be framed and infused by love or else they count for nothing. Moreover, the kind of love that counts as such is a love that, among other things, keeps on keeping on—it endures. In the face of resistance, weariness, changing circumstances, this love does not waver or fade. It remains through seasons of struggle and uncertainty. For Paul, this love is love—a love that does not fail.

Reflecting on the work we’ve done together over the years, Liza recently observed, “You know, you’re the one person who’s stuck by me through everything that’s happened.” In reply I smiled and sighed. The context for her comment was her daughter’s recent diagnosis with terminal brain cancer. Liza’s trauma work is on the back burner for us as we process through this latest tsunami of present-day pain. Trust has grown inside of her—a confidence born out of years of long-term connection and care. She is more settled now, more secure. She knows

who she is. Without anxiety or embarrassment, she speaks of how our working and our walking together have shaped her. She sees Christ more clearly. She grasps his love now not as a proposition to be agreed with but a cherished possession, a treasure. She’s careful to credit Jesus for how he’s healing her! Yet, she thanks him for sending me to embody his love to her.

While writing the last paragraph, I received a text message from Liza. She’d just returned from visiting out of state with her daughter and grandchildren. Signs are hopeful that the experimental treatment may be working to slow the growth of her daughter’s cancer. She’s holding up well after her first round of chemotherapy, and Liza is encouraged. Her text included a report on how she handled her son-in-law’s angry outbursts. Though she recognizes he’s under tremendous stress these days, she no longer lets him bully her in front of her grandchildren. She speaks up gently, firmly, asking him to demonstrate more respect in front of them. She’s begun witnessing a shift in how he treats her. I wrote back to affirm the growth in her that’s bringing about a change, however small, in him. Her text reply to me read, “I KNOW I am who I am today because of you and the time you invested in me.”

(1) Around 90% of my counselees cannot afford professional therapy and do not have insurance. One of my commitments as a pastoral counselor is to fund my practice through other means. I have a passion to see Christ-centered mental healthcare demonetized in the U.S. Toward that end, I recently launched a private foundation in my home state of Georgia, the Cornerstone Foundation ([cornerstonecolumbus.org](http://cornerstonecolumbus.org)), whose aim is to offer subsidies to mental health professionals working with individuals and families who cannot afford their services. As the CEO of the Christian Psychology Institute in Louisville, Kentucky

(2) I presented at the 2022 CAPS World Conference on a strategic, image-based exercise I have developed for individuals looking to make a short-term therapeutic breakthrough. That

session, presented with Eric L. Johnson, Ph.D., was entitled, "Into the Garden: An exercise in strategic, image-based therapy." The "Garden" exercise can be completed in a single session, though I typically recommend at least one follow-up session for processing.

(3) Liza is not her real name. She says, however, that she is comfortable with me anonymously sharing parts of her story in this context, "especially if God uses it to encourage others."



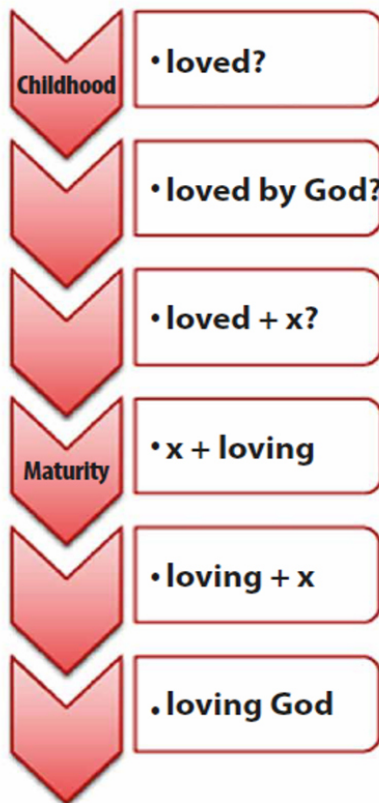
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# The Finale of our topic “Love in different dimensions”:

## Love is a lifelong learning process

If loving God and one’s neighbour is the highest commandment, then love is the most exciting, the greatest and most fascinating thing there is, regardless of how long we have already been Christians!



### Loved?

God’s will is that we should be loved as children, especially by those closest to us, such as e.g. our parents.

### Loved by God?

At some point will face the question of whether we wish to see ourselves as being loved by God and if we wish to surrender ourselves completely to this. The key point here is conversion as a about-turn and moment of dedication in life.

### Loved + x?

This experience of God’s love in Jesus Christ, received as a free gift, then finds expression in action (= x) for the Kingdom of God. “What is our calling? What should we be doing?” - These are the questions that occupy us.

### x + loving?

But as the years pass, these actions (= x) step increasingly into the foreground and gradually a new question emerges: How much more love can we give? As we know, nothing should be done except in love.

### Loving + x

Something of the mystery of God’s greatness and love is revealed in the next period of life: Surely love is more important than all our activities? “Love, and do whatever you wish”, Augustine said. (Referring, of course, to deeds which involve no conscious sinning.)

### Loving God

And finally: Loving God. Everything else moves into the background. The breadth and length and height and depth of divine love is enough, enough for me, for everything.

**Love – Jesus’ love and our own love – is the source of joy.**

### Suggestion for prayer: Seek God’s eyes

Blaise Pascal said: Man finds his only firm hold in the loving eyes of God.

God is permanently looking at you with pleasure and goodwill. Even at this very moment.

This gaze is something very intimate, something that we long for in the depths of our heart.

Fall silent in prayer and try to become a receiver of gifts, become aware that God is looking at you.

He looks at you with goodwill: “I wish the best for you.”

He looks at you with pleasure: “I rejoice when I see you.”

Werner May, Germany



O-Antiphone: Adonai



**Agnieszka Wojsz**  
(Poland)

Agnieszka Wojsz, psychotherapist and theologian works in integrative psychotherapy. Her work is guided by Christian anthropology and takes into account the spirituality of the client. She is also interested in psychodrama and runs support groups. She often shares her experience with psychotherapy students. She is a board member of the Association of Christian Psychologists and President of the Foundation, "W Innym Świecie". She lives in Warsaw.

Questions to Agnieszka Wojsz

## **Why would you describe yourself as a Christian psychologist?"**

### **How it came about that you've studied psychology/psychotherapy?**

It's quite a complicated story. When I was younger, I studied theology and journalism. I was fascinated by Christianity and Jesus Christ himself. Back then, gaining knowledge about religion and spirituality were the most important things to me. I wrote my master's thesis about the presence of evil and suffering in the world - it was then that I read Victor Frankl's book *Man's Search for Meaning*. Thanks to it I understood that human suffering can be physical, psychological and spiritual, and that in my research I need to consider man's psychological aspect more. I immersed myself in the writings of the Desert Fathers, particularly on the topic of *acedia*, that is, "spiritual depression" - my master then was Evagrius the Solitary - a monk, theologian and mystic from the fourth century, and in my opinion, a great psychologist. That is when I got more into psychology. After theology and journalism, I also finished my studies in history. This is what gave me the opportunity to work as a history and religion

teacher, as well as a youth tutor. During my work in school I continued to learn about psychology and pedagogy by attending various trainings. After a couple of years, there was a moment when I felt that working as a teacher is not enough for me anymore, that I am more interested in what mental state young people are in, rather than if they know history or religions of the world. I worked with the parents of students that were going through a crisis, and observed the development of burnout among teachers. All of that was why I started thinking about taking up a degree in psychotherapy. My friends and my family were supportive of this decision, so I moved from my beautiful coastal city of Gdynia to Warsaw and started my study of psychotherapy led by *Stowarzyszenie Psychologów Chrześcijańskich w Warszawie* (Association of Christian Psychologists in Warsaw) and *Polski Instytut Psychodramy* (the Polish Institute of Psychodrama).

**What was the focus of your study/training? Did you get any results that you would especially like to emphasize?**

During the training, I gained knowledge of psychology and practiced working in psychotherapy. I was especially interested in finding someone whom I could watch and learn from. I found Anna Ostaszewska, a wonderful supervisor, psychotherapist, co-founder of the Association of Christian Psychologists. In addition to skills, what I got from her was support and confirmation that I could be a good therapist. After completing basic training and beginning my practice, I noticed that the "Christian approach" in psychotherapy has an extraordinary power. I focused on exploring the relationship between psychology and spirituality, and I continue to do so today to better work with my clients. My biggest discovery is that there are people who come to me that are non-believers, who want to face some "empty space in themselves," which they sometimes call spirituality. I do not provide spiritual guidance, but they choose me so they can speak freely about their longings and their spiritual journey.

**Why would you call yourself a Christian psychotherapist?**

I would call myself that because I incorporate Christian anthropology into my work and I do not treat the client's inner spiritual experiences as some kind of disorder. Such experiences are familiar to me - as a Christian/Catholic, I know the ups and downs of our life of faith, and I also know the experience of being wounded in the Church, when the psyche of a leader or another believer is sick. As a theologian, I know what a healthy spirituality is. Often mental disorders twist one's spirituality and that is where I can help reduce the client's suffering.

**What are your actual professional duties? Can you please tell us a little bit about your experiences?**

First and foremost, I am a psychotherapist. I work in a private practice with individual clients.

As president of the "W innym świetle" Foundation, which provides people with psychological and spiritual help, I and my friends organize trainings and retreats, and help make it possible, for those who need it, to undertake individual therapy.



As a member of the board - secretary, in the Association of Christian Psychologists, I take care of the documentation and organization of the work of our Association.

I also conduct workshops for psychotherapy students at the Collegium Verum university in Warsaw.

I feel best in individual work with clients in the office, when I can accompany the change that is taking place within them. I also greatly enjoy passing on my experiences to students.

**I can see that your life is full of interesting tasks. And you have a private life too. Has this been stressful?**

Yes, while I do have a private life, sometimes I have to fight really hard for it. Unfortunately it does happen that I lose this fight, but then there are friends and supervisors who say to me, "Stop, and now... go take care of yourself."

**And: Do you have some concerns of your heart you will share with the readers?**

I think everyone has them. We are experiencing political changes, wars taking place not far from our borders and all the suffering they bring - all this does not make us very optimistic. This makes more clients knock on the door of my office, who have no hope that things will ever get better. Here lies the challenge - working with a person who has lost hope, faith and no longer believes in love. What do I do then? First I look to the one who is the Way, Truth and Life - Jesus Christ, and then... we start therapy :)

**Former Interviews with a Christian Psychologist:**

**„Why would you call yourself a Christian Psychologist?“**

NicolaDiFonco (USA):

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/20/#p=83>

Friedemann Alsdorf (Germany)

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/19/#p=51>

Steven Voss (USA)

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/18/#p=38>

Päivimaria Kuivamäki (Finland)

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/17/#p=32>

Olena Yaremko (Ukraine / Germany)

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/16/#p=27>



The Ark



# EMCAPP

European Movement for Christian  
Anthropology, Psychology and  
Psychotherapy [www.emcapp.eu](http://www.emcapp.eu)

## Information about the EMCAPP Symposium, organized by ACP Poland

Warsaw, November 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> 2024



## Spiritual Aspects in Psychology and Psychotherapy

### Program

#### Sunday, 10<sup>nd</sup> of November 2024

Welcome and participants' registration – Start of the Symposium - Dinner

#### Monday, 11<sup>nd</sup> of November 2024

Nicolene Joubert (South Africa): Trauma-Informed Christian Leadership: An Approach to Spiritual and Transformational Leadership.

Małgorzata Surma (Poland) Taking into account the patient's spirituality/religion in the psychotherapy process.

Joan D.A. Juanola (Spain): The integration of Christian anthropology in the university degree in psychology

City Tour Warsaw

#### Workshops:

Andrey Lorgus (Bulgaria/Russia): Self-realization or creativity and internal resources.

Stefano Parenti (Italy): Integral psychotherapy of the person, based on the anthropology of Thomas Aquinas.

Paweł Surma (Poland): 12 Steps To Living Life To The Full – A 12-Step Recovery Workshop as a Method of Integrating Spirituality in the Practice of Psychological Assistance.

Creative Spiritual Evening

#### Tuesday, 12<sup>nd</sup> of November 2024

Ulla Dahlen (Finland): The Heart-House Model for Christian Psychotherapy.

Paloma Alonso Stuyck (Spain): Koumi Project which aims to heal sexual wounds

Evaluation of the Symposium and plans for the future

EMCAPP Board meeting

Open time together, for those who haven't left yet

If you are interested to come, please write to: [post@werner-may.de](mailto:post@werner-may.de)



## About Us

This journal is published by the European Movement for Christian Anthropology, Psychology and Psychotherapy in cooperation with the IGNIS-Academy, Kanzler-Stürtzel-Str.2, D-97318 Kitzingen. EMCAPP as a non-institutional movement enjoys meeting Christian scholars and practitioner in the field of Christian anthropology, psychology, psychotherapy and counseling from all over the world and from most Christian traditions. We are focused on bringing together key persons from different countries. The richness of experience and background always stimulates and refreshes us.

This magazine is free and can be downloaded from our website. We appreciate everyone who recommends it.

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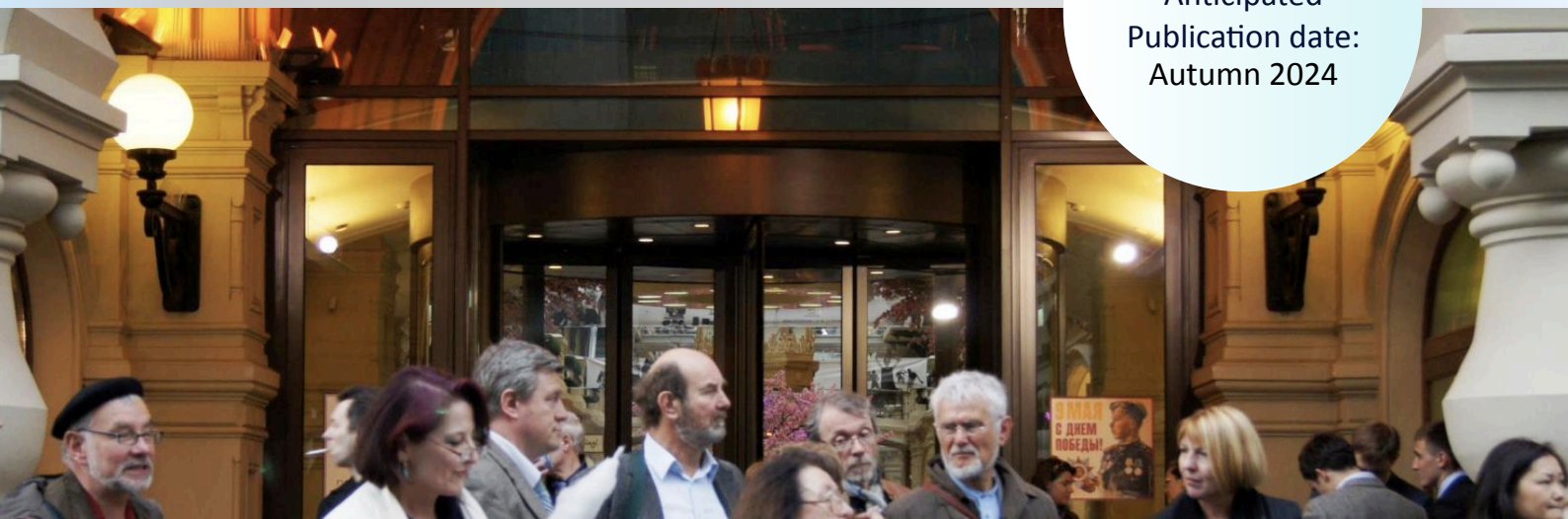
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## The Board of EMCAPP

- Mar Alvarez-Segura (Spain), child and adolescent psychotherapist for trauma treatment. Lecturer at Abat Oliba CEU University (Spain).
- Francesco Cution (Italy), clinical psychologist and psychotherapist, associate of the Italian Catholic Association of Psychologists and Psychiatrists, president founder of the association "Jonas is on the way", Rome.
- Nicolene Joubert (South Africa) psychologist, Head of the ICP: the Institute of Christian Psychology in Johannesburg [www.icp.org.za](http://www.icp.org.za).
- Rev. Andrey Lorgus (Russia), psychologist, Rector of the Institute of Christian Psychology in Moscow, <http://fapsyrou.ru>.
- Werner May (Germany), psychologist, former President of the Academy for Christian Psychology IGNIS [www.ignis.de](http://www.ignis.de), President of EMCAPP Board.
- Anna Ostaszewska (Poland), psychotherapist, supervisor, one of the founders of the Association of Christian Psychologists in Poland (ACP). Vice-President of EMCAPP Board
- Elena Strigo (Russia, city of Krasnojarsk, Siberian Region), psychologist, psychotherapist at the Psychological Counselling Center.

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# seven statements of emcapp



**The seven statements of EMCAPP are as follows:**

- 1. EMCAPP is based on the belief that there is a God who is actively maintaining this world, and therefore there cannot be any discussions about Man without talking about God.**
- 2. EMCAPP acknowledges the limitations of all human knowledge and therefore appreciates the attempts of the various Christian denominations to describe God and their faith.**
- 3. EMCAPP brings together international leaders and pioneers in the field of Christian psychology and psychotherapy and its underlying anthropology.**
- 4. EMCAPP respects and appreciates the cultural and linguistic diversity of backgrounds of its members.**
- 5. EMCAPP encourages its members to learn how to recognize each other as friends and brothers and sisters in Christ.**
- 6. EMCAPP encourages its members in their national challenges and responsibilities.**
- 7. EMCAPP has a global future and it is open to discourse and joint research opportunities around the world.**