

## 8: Consummation

LOVE BRINGS THE REAL, AND NOT JUST THE ideal, vision of what others are because it is a glimpse of what we are bodily. For what is ordinarily called the body is an abstraction. It is the conventional fiction of an object seen apart from its relation to the universe, without which it has no reality whatsoever. But the mysterious and unsought uprising of love is the experience of complete relationship with another, transforming our vision not only of the beloved but of the whole world. And so it remains until the relationship is itself abstracted by the anxiety of the grasping mind to be guarded from the rest of life as a possession.

The bodily and the physical is not to be mistaken for the world of atomic and discrete entities, and bodily union must not be confined to things so obviously visible as the juncture of Siamese twins. We need to recognize the physical reality of relationship between organisms as having as much "substance" as the organisms themselves, if not more. Thus however defective its doctrine of marriage in many respects, the Christian Church is perfectly correct in saying that husband and wife are one flesh. It is similarly correct to think of the members of the Church as the *Body of Christ*, especially if the Church is considered to be the process of realizing that the whole universe is the *Body of Christ*—which is what the doctrine of the Incarnation really implies.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Thus St. Cyril of Alexandria in *Epist. ad Rom.*, vi, says that in a sense the flesh of Christ "contained all nature, just as when Adam incurred

This makes it the more strange that conventional spirituality rejects the bodily union of man and woman as the most fleshly, animal, and degrading phase of human activity—a rejection showing the extent of its faulty perception and its misinterpretation of the natural world. It rejects the most concrete and creative form of man's relation to the world outside his organism, because it is through the love of a woman that he can say not only of her but also of all that is other, "This is my body."

Despite the Christian intuition of the world as the *Body of Christ*, the natural universe has been considered apart from and even opposed to God because it has not been experienced as one body. Considered as nothing more than a multiplicity of transient bodies, it appears that the natural world is finite and contingent upon something other than itself. No part of it remains, no part of it *is* being but only *has* being, and if the whole is only the sum of the parts, the whole cannot exist of itself. But all this comes from the failure to see that individual bodies are only the terms, the end-points, of relationships—in short, that the world is a system of inseparable relationships and not a mere juxtaposition of things. The verbal, piecemeal, and analytic mode of perception has blinded us to the fact that things and events do not exist apart from each other. The world is a whole greater than the sum of its parts because the parts are not merely summed—thrown together—but related. The whole is a pattern which remains, while the parts come and go, just as the human body is a dynamic pattern which persists despite the rapid birth and death of all its individual cells. The pattern does not, of course, exist disembodiedly apart from individual forms, but exists precisely through their coming and going—just as it is

condemnation the whole of nature contracted the disease of his curse in him."

through the structured motion and vibration of its electrons that a rock has solidity.

The naïve philosophical thinking upon which Western theology was founded assumed that what moved did not fully exist, since true existence must be stable and static. We see now that being and motion, mass and energy, are inseparable, and need no longer assume that what moves and changes is a defective form of reality. We can see that the eternal is the transient, for the changing panorama of sense experience is not just a sum of appearing and disappearing things: it is stable pattern or relationship manifested as and by transient forms. Our difficulty is that human consciousness has not adjusted itself to a relational and integrated view of nature. We must see that consciousness is neither an isolated soul nor the mere function of a single nervous system, but of that totality of interrelated stars and galaxies which makes a nervous system possible. We must come to *feel* what we know to be true in theory, to have a sense of ourselves compatible with what we know about the inseparability of the parts of nature.

In this light it will be clear that consciousness is no mere phosphorescent scum upon the foundations of fire and rock—a late addition to a world which is essentially unfeeling and mineral. Consciousness is rather the unfolding, the “e-volution,” of what has always been hidden in the heart of the primordial universe of stars. For a universe in which consciousness is no more than a statistical probability is still a universe in which consciousness is implicit. It is in the living organism that the whole world feels: it is only by virtue of eyes that the stars themselves are light. Relationship is a kind of identity. The stars and human eyes are not mutually alien objects brought into relation by mere confrontation. Suns, stars, and planets pro-

vide the conditions in which and from which organisms can arise. Their peculiar structure *implies* organisms in such a way that, were there no organisms, the structure of the universe would be entirely different, and so that organisms, in their turn, imply a universe of just this structure. It is only the time lag and the immense complexity of the relations between stars and men which make it difficult to see that they imply one another just as much as man and woman, or the two poles of the earth.

The failure to realize the mutuality and bodily unity of man and the world underlies both the sensual and the ascetic attitudes. Trying to grasp the pleasure of the senses and to make their enjoyment the goal of life is already an attitude in which man feels divided from his experience, and sees it as something to be exploited and pursued. But the pleasure so gained is always fragmentary and frustrating, so that by way of reaction the ascetic gives up the pursuit, but not the sense of division which is the real root of the difficulty. He accentuates dividedness by pitting his will against the flesh, by siding with the abstract against the concrete, and so aggravates the very feeling from which the pursuit of pleasure arose. Ascetic spirituality is a symptom of the very disease which it intends to cure. Sensuality and conventional spirituality are not truly opposed; their conflict is a mock battle staged, unconsciously, by partisans to a single “conspiracy.”<sup>2</sup>

Ascetic and sensualist alike confuse nature and “the body” with the abstract world of separate entities. Identifying themselves with the isolated individual, they feel inwardly incomplete. The sensualist tries to compensate

<sup>2</sup> See the marvellous discussion in L. L. Whyte (1), ch. 3, where the author attempts a physiological and historical analysis of the origins of the conflict. A current instance of this mock battle is the alliance of organized crime with conservative church groups to maintain the legal suppression of certain types of vice.

for his insufficiency by extracting pleasure, or completeness, from the world which appears to stand apart from him as something lacking. The ascetic, with an attitude of "sour grapes," makes a virtue of the lack. Both have failed to distinguish between pleasure and the pursuit of pleasure, between appetite or desire and the exploitation of desire, and to see that pleasure grasped is no pleasure. For pleasure is a grace and is not obedient to the commands of the will. In other words, it is brought about by the relationship between man and his world. Like mystical insight itself, it must always come unsought, which is to say that relationship can be experienced fully only by mind and senses which are open and not attempting to be clutching muscles. There is obviously nothing degrading in sensuous pleasure which comes "of itself," without craving. But in fact there is no other kind of pleasure, and the error of the sensualist is not so much that he is doing something evil as that he is attempting the impossible. Naturally, it is possible to exercise the muscles in pursuing something that may, or may not, give pleasure; but pleasure cannot be given unless the senses are in a state of accepting rather than taking, and for this reason they must not be, as it were, paralyzed and rigidified by the anxiety to get something out of the object.

All this is peculiarly true of love and of the sexual communion between man and woman. This is why it has such a strongly spiritual and mystical character when spontaneous, and why it is so degrading and frustrating when forced. It is for this reason that sexual love is so problematic in cultures where the human being is strongly identified with the abstract separate entity. The experience neither lives up to expectations nor fulfills the relationship between man and woman. At the same time it is, fragmentarily, gratifying enough to be pursued ever more re-

lentlessly for the release which it seems to promise. Sex is therefore the virtual religion of very many people, the end to which they accord more devotion than any other. To the conventionally religious mind this worship of sex is a dangerous and positively sinful substitute for the worship of God. But this is because sex, or any other pleasure, as ordinarily pursued is never a true fulfillment. For this very reason it is *not* God, but not at all because it is "merely physical." The rift between God and nature would vanish if we knew how to experience nature, because what keeps them apart is not a difference of substance but a split in the mind.

But, as we have seen, the problems of sexuality cannot be solved at their own level. The full splendor of sexual experience does not reveal itself without a new mode of attention to the world in general. On the other hand, the sexual relationship is a setting in which the full opening of attention may rather easily be realized because it is so immediately rewarding. It is the most common and dramatic instance of union between oneself and the other. But to serve as a means of initiation to the "one body" of the universe, it requires what we have called a contemplative approach. This is not love "without desire" in the sense of love without delight, but love which is not contrived or willfully provoked as an escape from the habitual empty feeling of an isolated ego.

It is not quite correct to say that such a relationship goes far beyond the "merely sexual," for it would be better to say that sexual contact irradiates every aspect of the encounter, spreading its warmth into work and conversation outside the bounds of actual "love-making." Sexuality is not a separate compartment of human life; it is a radiance pervading every human relationship, but assuming a particular intensity at certain points. Conversely, we might

say that sexuality is a special mode or degree of the total intercourse of man and nature. Its delight is an intimation of the ordinarily repressed delight which inheres in life itself, in our fundamental but normally unrealized identity with the world.

A relationship of this kind cannot adequately be discussed, as in manuals of sexual hygiene, as a matter of techniques. It is true that in Taoism and Tantric Buddhism there are what appear to be techniques or "practices" of sexual relationship, but these are, like sacraments, the "outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace." Their use is the consequence rather than the cause of a certain inner attitude, since they suggest themselves almost naturally to partners who take their love as it comes, contemplatively, and are in no hurry to grasp anything from it. Sexual yoga needs to be freed from a misunderstanding attached to all forms of yoga, of spiritual "practice" or "exercise," since these ill-chosen words suggest that yoga is a method for the progressive achievement of certain results—and this is exactly what it is not.<sup>3</sup> Yoga means "union," that is, the realization of man's inner identity with Brahman or Tao, and strictly speaking this is not an end to which there are methods or means since it cannot be made an object of desire. The attempt to achieve it invariably thrusts it away. Yoga "practices" are therefore sacramental expressions or "celebrations" of this union, in rather the same sense that Catholics celebrate the Mass as an expression of Christ's "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice." Means are irrelevant to what is already sufficient. Thus contemplation or meditation which seeks a result is neither contemplation nor meditation, for the simple reason that contemplation (*kuan*) is consciousness without seeking. Naturally, such consciousness is concen-

<sup>3</sup> See the excellent discussion of this point in Guénon (1), pp. 261-67.

trated, but it is not "practicing concentration"; it is concentrated in whatever happens to be its "eternal now."

Sexual yoga or, as it is technically called, *maithuna* is a common theme of Hindu sculpture, though it has been suggested that its origins are Chinese, arriving in India as the backwash of the spread of Buddhism. Westerners, including missionaries and Theosophists and Indians under their influence, have rather naturally spread the idea that these images are pornographic, and that sexual yoga represents a perverse and depraved degeneration of Eastern spirituality. Such a reaction is only to be expected from spectators to whom the idea of spiritualized sexuality is completely unfamiliar. But such serious and responsible scholars as Woodroffe (1), S. B. Dasgupta (1), and Coomaraswamy (1) have made it plain not only that such images have no pornographic intention, but also that what they represent is at once a metaphysical doctrine and a sacrament at least as sacred as Christian matrimony. For the *maithuna* figures have nothing to do with promiscuous ritual orgies. On the one hand, they are emblems of the eternal union of spirit and nature; on the other, they represent the consummation of contemplative love between mutually dedicated partners.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Woodroffe (1), p. 578, states that the partners are normally husband and wife, though in special circumstances, valid in a polygynous culture, the woman is a permanent wife-in-religion chosen because of spiritual compatibility with the man. The notion that sexual yoga is involved with "black magic" is one of the many distortions of Asian philosophy circulated by Theosophy—a Westernized version of Hindu-Buddhist teachings carrying over essentially Christian notions of evil. The Theosophists were in the first place misled by the fact that practitioners of sexual yoga adhered to the "left-hand path," a nomenclature to which they attached the purely Western associations of "sinister." But in Indian symbolism the right- and left-hand paths do not depart in opposite directions: they converge upon the same point like the two halves of a circle. The right-hand path seeks liberation by detachment from the world, and the left-hand by total acceptance of the world; the right is the—symbolically—male way, and the left the female, so that

The general idea of Tantric *maithuna*, as of its Taoist counterpart, is that sexual love may be transformed into a type of worship in which the partners are, for each other, incarnations of the divine. Perhaps this statement must be somewhat modified with respect to Buddhism and Taoism, to which the notion of worship is really foreign, and one must substitute the contemplation of nature in its true state. The embrace of *maithuna* involves also a transmutation of the sexual energy which it arouses, and this is described symbolically as sending it upwards from the loins to the head. Yoga, as is well known, involves a peculiar symbolism of human anatomy in which the spinal column is seen as a figure of the Tree of Life, with its roots in the nether world and its branches, or its flower, in the heavens beneath the "firmament" of the skull. The base of the spinal-tree is the seat of *kundalini*, the Serpent Power, which is an image of the divine life-energy incarnate in nature and asleep under the illusion of *maya*. Yoga consists in awakening the Serpent and allowing it to ascend the tree to the heavens, wherefrom it passes liberated through the "sun-door" at the apex of the skull. Thus when the Serpent is at the base of the spinal-tree it manifests its power as sexual energy; when it is at the crown it manifests itself as spiritual energy.

According to Tantric symbolism, the energy of the *kundalini* is aroused but simply dissipated in ordinary

in the left man finds liberation through nature and through woman. Hence the discipline is called *sahaja*, the natural or spontaneous way. It must furthermore be remembered that Theosophical attitudes reflected the nineteenth-century prudishness of middle-class England and America. A similar confusion was the Theosophical invention of a "lodge" of "*dupgas*" or black magicians, based on what was at the time mere hearsay about the now well-known Drug-pa Sect of Tibetan Buddhism. On the complex metaphysical symbolism of *maithuna* or *yab-yum* (Tibet) figures, see S. B. Dasgupta (1), pp. 98-134. The correspondence is not always strictly that of spirit and nature, but also of wisdom (*prajna*) and activity (*upaya*), voidness (*sunyata*) and compassion (*karuna*).

sexual activity. It can, however, be transmuted in a prolonged embrace in which the male orgasm is reserved and the sexual energy diverted into contemplation of the divine as incarnate in the woman.<sup>5</sup> The partners are therefore seated in the cross-legged posture of meditation, the woman clasping the man's waist with her thighs and her arms about his neck. Such a position is clearly unsuitable for motion, the point being that the partners should remain still and so prolong the embrace that the exchange between them would be passive and receptive rather than active. Nothing is *done* to excite the sexual energy; it is simply allowed to follow its own course without being "grasped" or exploited by the imagination and the will. In the meantime the mind and senses are not given up to fantasy, but remain simply open to "what is," without—as we should say in current slang—trying to make something of it.

In trying to understand anything of this kind, the modern Westerner must be careful not to confuse the symbolism of the *kundalini* and the ascension of the sexual force with any physiological situation. Indeed, anatomical symbolisms of this kind are so strange to us that they hinder rather than help our comprehension of the real intent. Furthermore, almost all ancient sexual ideas are bound up with notions of the semen and its properties which we no longer share, and thus we do not regard it as a vital fluid to be conserved like blood. Our physiology does not support the idea that the male orgasm is a debilitating leakage of strength, and therefore the mere avoidance of the orgasm will have little significance in any modern application of sexual yoga.

<sup>5</sup>The Taoist practice permits the orgasm in due course, and the female orgasm was felt to nourish and strengthen the male force. See Needham (1), vol. 2, pp. 149-50.

The importance of these ancient ideas to us lies not so much in their technicalities as in their psychological intent. They express an attitude to sexuality which, if absorbed by us today, could contribute more than anything else to the healing of the confusion and frustration of our marital and sexual relations. It remains, then, to separate the underlying sexual philosophy of Tantra and Taoism from symbolic and ritual elements which have no meaning for us, and to see whether it can be applied in terms of our own culture.

To clarify the basic intent of sexual yoga we must study its practice in context with the underlying principles of Buddhist and Taoist philosophy. For Buddhism the basic principle is to have one's consciousness undisturbed by *trishna*, or grasping desire, in such a way that the senses do not receive a distorted and fragmentary vision of the world. For Taoism the principle differs only in terminology: it is *wu-wei*, or noninterference with the Tao or course of nature, which is the organic and spontaneous functioning of man-in-relation-to-his-environment. Both involve the contemplative or open-sensed attitude to experience, the Buddhist *dhyana* (in Japanese, *zen*) and the Taoist *kuan*. In their respective yogas, both practice "watching over the breath" because the rhythm of breathing determines the total disposition of the organism. Now, their attitude to breathing is one of the main keys to understanding their attitude to sexuality.

According to some accounts, perfect mastery of the breath is attained when its rhythm comes to a total stop—without loss of life. This is obviously a literalistic caricature, based on a crude version of the meaning of *nirvana*—"breathed out." Actually, "watching over the breath" consists in letting the breath come and go as it wants, without forcing it or clutching at it. In due course its

rhythm automatically slows down, and it flows in and out so smoothly that all rasping and hissing ceases *as if* it had stopped. This is both a symbol of and a positive aid to letting one's whole life come and go without grasping, since the way a person breathes is indicative of the way he lives.

In the sexual sphere the stopping of the male orgasm is just as much of a literalism as the stopping of breath; the point in both instances is not to stop but not to grasp. As contemplation of the breathing process automatically slows it down, sexual contemplation naturally delays the orgasm. For there is no value in prolonged and motionless intercourse as such; the point is to allow the sexual process to become spontaneous, and this cannot happen without the prior disappearance of the ego—of the forcing of sexual pleasure. Thus the orgasm is spontaneous (*tsu-jan*) when it happens of itself and in its own time, and when the rest of the body moves *in response* to it. Active or forced sexual intercourse is the deliberate imitation of movements which should ordinarily come about of themselves. Given the open attitude of mind and senses, sexual love in this spirit is a revelation. Long before the male orgasm begins, the sexual impulse manifests itself as what can only be described, psychologically, as a melting warmth between the partners so that they seem veritably to flow into each other. To put it in another way, "physical lust" transforms itself into the most considerate and tender form of love imaginable.

A valuable attempt to work out something of this kind for modern conditions has been made by von Urban (1), but for these purposes his approach is too much at the level of sexual hygiene and too preoccupied with technical directions that are somewhat inelastic and compulsive. Furthermore, just as the Tantric discussions are overlaid with their elaborate anatomical symbolism, von Urban has

introduced some highly speculative ideas about electrical exchanges between sexual partners which resemble the "orgone" theories of Reich (1). But mechanistic symbolisms of mysterious "forces" and "fluids," to account for the intense feeling of interchange between the partners, are unnecessary in a philosophy of nature which gives due weight to the fact that organisms exist only by relation to each other and to their environment. Sexual love in the contemplative spirit simply provides the conditions in which we can be aware of our mutual interdependence and "oneness."

The point is so important that it can bear repetition: contemplative love—like contemplative meditation—is only quite secondarily a matter of technique. For it has no specific aim; there is nothing particular that has to be made to happen. It is simply that a man and a woman are together exploring their spontaneous feeling—without any preconceived idea of what it ought to be, since the sphere of contemplation is not what should be but what *is*. In a world of clocks and schedules the one really important technical item is the provision of adequate time. Yet this is not so much clock time as psychological time, the attitude of letting things happen in their own time, and of an ungrasping and unhurrying interchange of the senses with their objects. In default of this attitude the greater part of sexual experience in our culture falls far short of its possibilities.<sup>6</sup> The encounter is brief, the fe-

<sup>6</sup> Kinsey (1), p. 580, states that "for perhaps three-quarters of all males, orgasm is reached within two minutes after the initiation of the sexual relation, and for a not inconsiderable number of males the climax may be reached within less than a minute or even within ten or twenty seconds after coital entrance." He goes on to point out that this seems natural enough if man be compared with other mammals, but that unfortunately this makes it difficult for most women to experience the orgasm. He feels, therefore, that it is "demanding that the male be quite abnormal in his ability to prolong sexual activity without ejaculation if

male orgasm relatively rare, and the male orgasm precipitate or "forced" by premature motion. By contrast, the contemplative and inactive mode of intercourse makes it possible to prolong the interchange almost indefinitely, and to delay the male orgasm without discomfort or the necessity of diverting full attention from the situation. Furthermore, when the man has become accustomed to this approach, it is possible also for him to engage in active intercourse for a very much longer period, so affording the greatest possible stimulation for the woman.<sup>7</sup>

One of the first phases of contemplative love is the discovery of the depth and satisfaction of very simple contacts which are ordinarily called "preliminaries" to sexual activity. But in a relationship which has no goal other than itself, nothing is merely preliminary. One finds out what it can mean simply to look at the other person, to touch hands, or to listen to the voice. If these contacts are not regarded as leading to something else, but rather allowed to come to one's consciousness as if the source of activity lay in them and not in the will, they become sensations of immense subtlety and richness. Received thus, the ex-

he is required to match the female partner." It has been pointed out by Ford and Beach (1), pp. 30-31, that we have little evidence to show the extent of the female orgasm among mammals, but that it is supposedly rare or absent among the primates. However, the considerable physical differences between man and the higher mammals require caution in using these species to determine what is "natural" for man. Kinsey's statistical estimates, so often questioned, may be compared with those of Dickinson and Beam (1), quoted by Ford and Beach, p. 32, giving the duration of intercourse of a sample of 362 American couples as less than 10 minutes for 74 per cent and less than 20 minutes for 91 per cent. <sup>7</sup> *Karezza*, or intercourse without the male orgasm (*coitus reservatus*), is also possible in this way, though there is considerable difference of opinion as to its psychological healthiness, especially when used frequently as a means of contraception. Possible psychological dangers are perhaps diminished by the great satisfaction of sexual contact alone in the contemplative mood. However the "spirituality" of *karezza* is connected with unverified notions about the sublimation of the semen and the loss of psychic "power" involved in its ejaculation.

ternal world acquires a liveliness which one ordinarily associates only with one's own bodily activity, and from this comes the sensation that one's body somehow includes the external world.

It was through the practice of *za-zen* or "sitting meditation" in this particular attitude that Japanese Zen Buddhists discovered the possibilities of such arts as the tea ceremony (*cha-no-yu*), wherein the most intense aesthetic delight is found in the simplest social association of drinking tea with a few friends. For the art developed into a contemplation of the unexpected beauty in the "primitive" and unpretentious utensils employed, and in the natural simplicity of the surroundings—the unchiselled mountain rocks in the garden, the texture of paper walls, and the grain of rough wooden beams. Obviously, the cultivation of this viewpoint can lead to an infinitely refined snobbery when it is done with an eye to oneself doing it—when, in other words, the point becomes not the objects of contemplation but the "exercise" of contemplating. For this reason, lovers who begin to relate themselves to each other in this way need not feel that they are practicing a skill in which there are certain standards of excellence which they *ought* to attain. It is simply absurd for them to sit down and *restrain* themselves just to looking at each other, while fighting off the intense desire to fall into each other's arms. The point is to discover the wonder of simple contacts, not the duty of it, for which reason it may be better at first to explore this type of relationship after intercourse than before.

The fact remains, however, that if they let themselves come gradually and gently into contact, they create a situation in which their senses can really work, so that when they have discovered what it can mean just to touch hands, the intimacy of a kiss or even of lips in near proximity re-

gains the "electric" quality which it had at the first meeting. In other words, they find out what the kiss *really* involves, just as profound love reveals what other people really are: beings in relation, not in isolation.

If we say that from such contacts the movement toward sexual intercourse grows of itself, it may be supposed that this is no more than what ordinarily happens. Intimacy just leads to passion; it certainly does not have to be willed. But there is all the difference in the world between gobbling and actually tasting food when one is hungry. It is not merely that appetite needs restraint; it needs awareness—awareness of the total process of the organism-environment moving into action of itself. As the lead and response of good dancers appears to be almost simultaneous, as if they were a single entity, there comes a moment when more intimate sexual contact occurs with an extraordinary mutuality. The man does not lead and the woman follow; the man-and-woman relationship acts of itself. The feeling of this mutuality is entirely distinct from that of a man initiating sexual contact with a perfectly willing woman. His "advance" and her "response" seems to be the *same* movement.

At a particular but unpredetermined moment they may, for example, take off their clothes as if the hands of each belonged to the other. The gesture is neither awkward nor bold; it is the simultaneous expression of a unity beneath the masks of social roles and proprieties by the revelation and contact of the intimate and off-scene aspects of their bodies. Now, these aspects are ordinarily guarded because of their extreme sensitivity, or awareness of relationship. Only the eyes are as sensitive, and in ordinary social intercourse prolonged eye-contact is avoided because of its embarrassing intimacy—embarrassing because it creates a sense of relationship belying and overpassing the sepa-



rative roles which we take so much trouble to maintain. For the sensitive organs of the body which we call most intimate and private are not, as might be supposed, the most central to the ego. On the contrary, they are those which most surpass the ego because their sensitivity brings the greatest contact with the outside world, the greatest intimacy with what is formally "other."

The psychic counterpart of this bodily and sensuous intimacy is a similar openness of attention to each other's thoughts—a form of communion which can be as sexually "charged" as physical contact. This is the feeling that one can express one's thoughts to the other just as they are, since there is not the slightest compulsion to assume a pretended character. This is perhaps the rarest and most difficult aspect of any human relationship, since in ordinary social converse the spontaneous arising of thought is more carefully hidden than anything else. Between unconscious and humorless people who do not know and accept their own limitations it is almost impossible, for the things which we criticize most readily in others are usually those of which we are least conscious in ourselves. Yet this is quite the most important part of a deep sexual relationship, and it is in some way understood even when thoughts are left unsaid.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Obviously, we are speaking here of a very special relationship which is seldom to be found in the ordinary marriage contracted between emotionally immature and socially rigid people, when the more mature partner should express his or her mind only with the utmost consideration for the other. Complete self-expression is really a form of self-indulgence in circumstances where it cannot be received. While it may sometimes be "good" for another person to be frank with them, husbands and wives should be the last people to take on programs of mutual improvement. It may be cynical, but it is good-naturedly and humanly so, to assume that one's spouse is going to remain just as he or she is, and that one is going to have to live with these limitations. If they are going to change at all, this is the only way to begin. For this is already an act of deep acceptance of the other person, which may become mutual by a kind of psychic osmosis.

It is significant that we commonly say that those with whom we can express ourselves most spontaneously are those with whom we can most fully be ourselves. For this already implies that the full and real self is not the willing and deliberating function but the spontaneous. In the same way that our most sensitive organs are guarded because they transcend and break the bonds of the ego, the flow of thought and feeling—though called one's "inner self"—is the most spontaneous and role-free activity of all. The more inward and central the form of activity, the less it partakes of the mask of the ego. To unveil the flow of thought can therefore be an even greater sexual intimacy than physical nakedness.

In contemplative love we do not speak of the sexual "act," since this puts intercourse into its own special dissociated compartment, where it becomes what Albert Jay Nock called very properly and humorously the "cultivating exercise." Perhaps one of the subordinate reasons why sex is a matter for laughter is that there is something ridiculous in "doing" it with set purpose and deliberation—even when described with so picturesque a phrase as the Chinese "flowery combat." Without wanting to make rules for this freest of all human associations, it is certainly best to approach it inactively. For when the couple are so close to each other that the sexual parts are touching, it is only necessary to remain quietly and unhurriedly still, so that in time the woman can absorb the man's member into herself without being actively penetrated.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Von Urban (1) does not recommend the cross-legged "Tantric" posture, which is naturally difficult for those not used to sitting in this way. Instead, he suggests lying at right angles to each other, the woman on her back with one leg between the man's thighs and the other resting on his hip. In this way the contact is purely genital and the whole relationship between the two "pours through" this center. While this is an excellent way of beginning, there is no need to make it a fixed rule, though there is an extraordinary intensity in letting the whole feeling-

It is at this juncture that simple waiting with open attention is most rewarding. If no attempt is made to induce the orgasm by bodily motion, the interpenetration of the sexual centers becomes a channel of the most vivid psychic interchange. While neither partner is working to make anything happen, both surrender themselves completely to whatever the process itself may feel like doing. The sense of identity with the other becomes peculiarly intense, though it is rather as if a new identity were formed between them with a life of its own. This life—one might say this Tao—lifts them out of themselves so that they feel carried together upon a stream of vitality which can only be called cosmic, because it is no longer what “you” and “I” are doing. Although the man does nothing either to excite or withhold the orgasm, it becomes possible to let this interchange continue for an hour or more, during which the female orgasm may occur several times with a very slight amount of active stimulation, depending upon the degree of her receptivity to the experience as a process taking charge of her.

In due course, both partners feel relieved of all anxiety as to whether orgasm will or will not happen, which makes it possible for them to give themselves up to whatever forms of sexual play may suggest themselves, however active or even violent. We say “suggest themselves” because this is a matter of immediate feeling rather than learned technique—a response to the marvellously overwhelming urge to turn themselves inside out for each other. Or it may happen that they prefer simply to remain still and let the process unfold itself at the level of pure feeling, which usually tends to be the deeper and more psychically satisfying way.

relationship pass through the sexual centers alone. The “absorption” of the male member depends, of course, upon the sufficient secretion of vaginal moisture.

Feelings which at the height of intercourse are often taken for the extremity of lust—that question-begging word—are simply the *ananda*, the ecstasy of bliss, which accompanies the experience of relationship as distinct from isolated selfhood. “Abandon” expresses the mood better than “lust,” because the two individuals give themselves up to the process or relationship between them, and this abandonment of wills can become so intense that it feels like the desire to give up life itself—to die into the other person. De Rougemont (1) maintains—I think wrongly—that this “death wish” distinguishes mere passion or *eros* from divine love or *agape*. He feels that the former, being a purely creaturely love, seeks the nonbeing which was its origin, and that the latter is the love of the Creator which seeks life because its origin is pure Being. This entirely neglects the Christian mystery of Death and Resurrection, which is the Christian version of the more widely held truth that death and life are not opposed, but mutually arising aspects of a Whole—so that life emerges from plunging into death, and death from plunging into life. But the death wish in love is figurative, the giving up of life being a poetic image for the mystical, self-transcending quality of sexual transport. Death in the same figurative sense, as “dying to oneself,” is commonly used in mystical literature for the process whereby the individual becomes divine. It is no more literal than the “death” of a grain of corn planted in the soil, or of a caterpillar sleeping in its chrysalis.

The mood of intense sexual delight is not, however, always quite so overwhelming as a desire to “die.” The sense of “abandon” or of being carried out of oneself may equally find expression in gaiety, and this is peculiarly true when the experience brings a strong sense of fulfillment. Rare as such gaiety may be in cultures where there is a tie between sex and guilt, the release from self brings laugh-

ter in love-making as much as in mysticism, for we must remember that it was Dante who described the song of the angels in heaven as "the laughter of the universe." "Love," said Coventry Patmore, "raises the spirit above the sphere of reverence and worship into one of laughter and dalliance." This is above all true when the partners are not *working* at their love to be sure that they attain a "real experience." The grasping approach to sexuality destroys its gaiety before anything else, blocking up its deepest and most secret fountain. For there is really no other reason for creation than pure joy.

It is no matter for timing by the clock how long this play should continue. Let it be repeated again, its timeless quality is not attained by endurance or even duration, but by absence of purpose and hurry. The final release of orgasm, neither sought nor restrained, is simply allowed to "come," as even the popular expression suggests from our intuitive knowledge that it is not a deed but a gift and a grace. When this experience bursts in upon fully opened feelings it is no mere "sneeze in the loins" relieving physical tension: it is an explosion whose outermost sparks are the stars.

This may seem irreverent, or just claiming too much, to those who are unwilling to feel it completely, refusing to see anything mystical or divine in the moment of life's origin. Yet it is just in treating this moment as a bestial convulsion that we reveal our vast separation from life. It is just at this extreme point that we must find the physical and the spiritual to be one, for otherwise our mysticism is sentimental or sterile-pure and our sexuality just vulgar. Without—in its true sense—the lustiness of sex, religion is joyless and abstract; without the self-abandonment of religion, sex is a mechanical masturbation.

The height of sexual love, coming upon us of itself, is one

of the most total experiences of relationship to the other of which we are capable, but prejudice and insensitivity have prevented us from seeing that in any other circumstances such delight would be called mystical ecstasy. For what lovers feel for each other in this moment is no other than adoration in its full religious sense, and its climax is almost literally the pouring of their lives into each other. Such adoration, which is due only to God, would indeed be idolatrous were it not that in that moment love takes away illusion and shows the beloved for what he or she in truth is—not the socially pretended person but the naturally divine.

Mystical vision, as has always been recognized, does not remain at the peak of ecstasy. As in love, its ecstasy leads into clarity and peace. The aftermath of love is an anti-climax only when the climax has been taken and not received. But when the whole experience was received the aftermath finds one in a marvellously changed and yet unchanged world, and here we are speaking of spirituality and sexuality in the same breath. For the mind and senses do not now have to open themselves; they find themselves naturally opened, and it appears that the divine world is no other than the everyday world. Just as they come and just as they are, the simplest sights and sounds are sufficient, and do not have to be brushed aside in the mind's eagerness to find something more significant. One is thereby initiated from the world of clock time to the world of real time, in which events come and go of themselves in unforced succession—timed by themselves and not by the mind. As the accomplished singer does not *sing* a song but lets it sing itself with his voice—since otherwise he will lose the rhythm and strain the tone—the course of life is here seen to happen of itself, in a continuum where the active and the passive, the inward and

the outward are the same. Here we have at last found the true place of man in nature which underlies the imagery of the Chinese poem:

*Let us live  
Among the white clouds and scarlet woodlands,  
Singing together  
Songs of the Great Peace.*<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Teiwa shu*, ii. Tr. Ruth Sasaki, in *Zen Notes*, III, 10. New York, 1956.