

The Collegian Presents

An Essay By Mr. Campbell

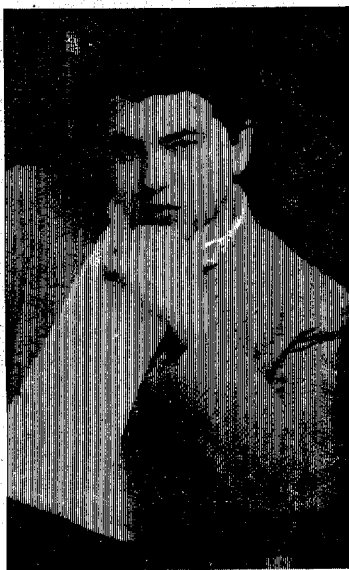
Love is a matter of extreme seriousness. It is, as Rainer Maria Rilke wrote, "that for which all else is but a preparation." Love is of ultimate seriousness because it is a matter of your whole being. In love it is your self that is at stake.

Seriousness is having your self at issue in what you do. It is not a matter of any one particular activity in which you participate, but a matter of the way in which you relate to any event whatsoever in your world. A clown can be serious. A poet can be frivolous. What counts is whether or not the clown is himself at issue in his seeming frivolity. Is someone destroyed if children fail to laugh with him? Is he born anew in joyousness if they do laugh? A poet may have nothing at stake in his poem. It may to him be a matter of technique, nothing more. Whether it wins a Pulitzer prize or is lost in a heap of poems never published is to him a matter of indifference.

Is love an idea? Is it a thought in our head which once understood by reason guarantees that we are able to live lovingly in our world? Is love a word we can live once we have read its definition in Webster's? Is it a thing like a stone which we place in our pocket or skip across a pond, an object we easily forget or lose in the muddy bottom of our existence? Is love like a workscrew, something we master once we understand its use? Or is love a feeling? Is it what we have when our heart pounds, our hands sweat, our knees weaken at the sight of that he or she we consider special, who makes our toes tingle and our hair curl?

According to Eric Fromm there are several types of serious love. There is what he calls "motherly love", love for the helpless and the weak, love giv-

ing whether or not it is deserved. There is what he calls "fatherly love", a love for the successful and the strong, love given when



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it is earned. There is "brotherly love", love for one's fellow man, and "self love", love for oneself based not on a neurotic narcissism but on an understanding of oneself as a unique human being. Lastly, there is what Fromm calls "erotic love," love rooted in the responsiveness one has to a single person he considers to be of exceptional importance. Erotic love, to be healthy, presupposes the several other kinds of love. In order to fully love a particular person one must be able to forgive, be able to judge, be able to sympathize and be able to respect himself.

Fromm also distinguishes several ways in which we fail to love. Love is not a weapon or a shield. It is not something to be "used." But to many persons love is no more than a means of glorifying themselves by coercing other individuals into becom-

ing their slaves. To still others it has become a way of removing their responsibility for themselves by permitting themselves to be abused, to be mastered for the sake of love. Sadism on the one hand, and masochism on the other, are ways in which many of us escape real love by substituting for it a sham.

In our culture, even in the halls of Highacres, a common example of the sadist is Mr. Cool, the modern day Don Juan who conceives of a woman as a "bird" that he will have the pleasure of defeathering, of plucking. He approaches her not because of the person she is but because of the clothes she wears (or fails to wear), or because of the friends she has or because of her willingness to "go down", as if he were the new Moses or the new Messiah. There is Miss Hot too. She is the turkey who gobbles up men because of their willingness to savor the flavors with which she taunts them. She cares about a man's car, about his clothes, about his ability to take her wherever she wants to go, about his money in the bank (or better in his pocket), more than she does about him. To both Cool and Hot, who are themselves sick with the inability to develop rich human relationships with other persons, the people to be relished or those who offer testimony to the metallic cookware to which our Mr. or Miss have reduced themselves. The persons with whom Cool and Hot become involved, if that is the word for it, are to them no more than so many licorice sticks to be sucked dry as they see fit, no more than some rusty pennies thrown in a dirty jar and sought only when the cellophane egos of Cool or Hot need some small change.

Mr. Cool and Miss Hot are able to function in the world because a large number of individuals have failed to develop any temperature of their own, any humanity that is healthfully and wholly theirs. They are the colorless, odorless, tasteless non-persons who use Ban and Lavoris because someone told them to. They hope to acquire from the world what they have refused to create for themselves — an identity. They are the Nowhere Man who relies totally on others for his evaluation of himself. If they are ravished, their first reaction is gratitude.

You may believe that what is suggested here is a fabrication. Men tend to exclude themselves from any generalization which may indict their behavior. So do women. Perhaps a way to show that the attitude so far described occurs on this campus and in this town as much as they do elsewhere is to examine several phrases in our colloquial speech.

We "pick up" a chic; we "make" a girl or we "make it"; we also "cut it" or "stitch it" or "starch it." These phrases are singularly mechanistic. We talk about other human beings in the same terms as we speak about our garbage; both are "picked up." Just what is it that we "make" when we have plucked a bird? Just what have we made when we have "made it"? Have we dug a ditch? Have we begun to forge in iron our own exit from paradise? Have we put one more entry in our celestial log; the one we keep by the toilet: "Stardate. Knocked off another one. That's eighteen this week. Color me used and advance me three spaces toward being a real man!" And let us not think it is only the men who do the ravishing. If men use language that

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