

# AN EVOLUTIONARY SOCIOLOGY OF LOVE

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*Sociologists of marriage and the family have generally treated love as a heterosexual, romantic, and marital phenomenon. They have approached it from a microsocial perspective, and have tended to define it in psychological terms. Love has rarely been considered a core concept in sociological theorizing. In this paper, I outline a macrosociological perspective on love that lends itself to an evolutionary interpretation. I explore the implications of the conceptualization of love as a social fact for theorists concerned with the conditions which facilitate sociocultural evolution and human development. Humanistic perspectives on love developed primarily by psychologists are, I suggest, compatible with recent developments in evolutionary theory regarding the importance of cooperation. Sorokin's speculations on the power of love are discussed as anticipations of the more systematic treatment carried out by more recent investigators. Love manifests the function of intimacy as a factor in facilitating information exchange and learning. This idea leads to the notion that love—appropriately conceived—is an evolutionary mechanism. Love may be a manifestation of a critical cooperative factor needed to solve emerging problems of individual and collective survival and growth. These problems are new in type and scale. There is a link, I argue, between love and the global political, economic, and general cultural imperatives of our time. The recognition and analysis of this link can, I suggest, improve our understanding of contemporary society in evolution.*

Sociologists specializing in marriage and the family generally define love in psychological terms, and focus on love as a heterosexual, romantic, and marital phenomenon. Some sociologists share a broader humanistic orientation to love as a factor in self-actualization, caring, cooperation, adapta-

bility, and evolution. This orientation, however, still stresses psychological definitions, and individual needs in heterosexual couples. My aim in this paper is to sketch a sociological rationale for the humanistic conception of love as a factor in human survival and evolution. The idea that love is a

social fact is the basis for conceiving love as a manifestation of a "cooperative principle" which has become increasingly important in evolution.

#### *Sociological Perspectives on Love*

Sociologists tend to psychologize love by defining it in terms of feelings. Bell (1971: 114) summarized the sociological literature on love by noting that most definitions of love present it as a strong emotional bond between two people which satisfies their needs to give and to receive. Even when they focus on love as a relationship, sociologists tend to define it as a psychological state. Cavan (1969: 375), for example, purposefully limits her discussion of love to the interpersonal bond. She does not, however, define love in terms of the bond but rather as a "pleasurable," or "joyous" feeling (cf. Ramey, 1976: 214). The prevailing "paradigm" in the sociology of love is further characterized by an emphasis on the romantic aspects of love, often to the point of equating "love" with "romantic love" (e.g., Reiss, 1971: 95-96). Fullerton's (1972: 342-357) critique of romantic love is a notable exception. Some sociologists have noted the need to broaden the study of love, and to treat it in more strongly sociological terms (e.g., Goode, 1973: 169; Reiss, 1973: 170-177). These efforts, however, have been carried out within the boundaries of heterosexual relationships, courtship, and marriage.

Sociologists have viewed love from a variety of theoretical perspectives. Love has been treated as a type of primary relationship (Reiss, 1971), a

case of intrinsic attraction in an exchange relationship (Blau, 1964: 76), and a "game" based on cost-benefit accounting (Scanzoni, 1972: 72; Bernard, 1964: 675-739; Nye and Berardo, 1973: 124).<sup>1</sup> All of these accounts focus on the microsocial level, and usually on two-person relationships. There are no indications that these diverse efforts are leading to the development of a general, widely-acceptable micro-sociological theory of love. At the same time sociologists have given little thought to the possibility of a macro-sociological theory of love. This possibility is more clearly manifested in the humanistic literature on love.

#### *The Humanistic Conception of Love*

Humanists offer an alternative to the conventional sociological treatment of love. Maslow, for example, approached love within the context of a humanistic program in social science oriented to the "Big Problem" of creating the "Good Person" and the "Good Society." The Good Person is "self-evolving," "fully illuminated," and "fully human"; the Good Society is one in which people work together as "colleagues and teammates" rather than rivals (Maslow, 1971: 19, 208).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>A *psychology* of love as a phenomenon of reward and punishment has been proposed by Miller and Siegel (1971). They define love as a learned form of approach behavior. Love has also been analyzed from a phenomenological viewpoint (Wilson, 1972), as an exercise in communication (Otto, 1972), and from a developmental interpersonal perspective (Orlinsky, 1972). For more formal and quantitative approaches see Bardis (1971) and Burr (1973).

<sup>2</sup>Maslow describes eight characteristics

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This orientation contrasts sharply with the prevailing orientation in the sociology of love which tends to ignore or draw attention away from the relationship between love and humanistic concerns about self-actualization and the Good Society.<sup>3</sup>

The humanistic conception of love has roots in the Platonic idea of love as the foundation of virtue.<sup>4</sup> In humanistic

of self-actualization: (1) full, vivid selfless experiencing, "with full concentration and absorption"; (2) making choices that, on the average, promote growth; choices based on defense, safety, and fear are generally regressive choices and therefore opposed to self-actualization; (3) "listening to the impulse voices" instead of the introjected voices of parents; (4) taking responsibility, looking within oneself for answers, being honest rather than dishonest "when in doubt"; (5) "daring to be different, unpopular, nonconformist"; (6) "working to do well the thing one wants to do"; (7) ridding oneself of illusions and false notations; and (8) identifying and then giving up defenses (Maslow, 1971: 45-50).

<sup>3</sup>An early example of a marriage and the family textbook that does treat love in relation to self-actualization is Landis and Landis (1958: 132-134). The authors identify four characteristics of love: (1) cooperation; (2) friendship, of the same kind that can unite two people of the same sex; (3) growth, through increased awareness of surrounding meanings, needs, and opportunities; (4) mutual support, in good and bad times. Landis and Landis conceive love as "mutual concern": "You love a person if his well-being, his growth toward his greatest potential in all facets of his personality, matters to you as much as your own, probably not more, but as much."

<sup>4</sup>The conclusion of the dialogue on love in Plato's *Symposium* is that love transcends "gold, and garments, and fair boys, and youths," and the contentment of "seeing them only and conversing with them without

social science, love is conceived as a condition of self-actualization. Love-of-self and love-of-others are viewed as the necessary foundation for a life oriented to identifying and actualizing human potentials. Fromm made an important contribution to the development of this perspective in *The Art of Loving* (1956). He conceived love as a solution to the problems of existence that (1) affirms the person's "aliveness," and (2) promotes self-actualization. In Fromm's analysis, mature love (distinguished from symbiotic love) is based on the Delphic motto, "know thyself." The components of mature love are caring, respect, responsibility, and knowledge.

The existential emphasis in Fromm's analysis should not obscure the fact that love is a social activity and process. The relationship between love and self-actualization is not confined to the self's existential space. It is a social relationship that has a development over time. Maslow (1954: 257), for example, notes that the love relationship in self-actualization is a fusion of (1) the ability to love and (2) respect for oneself and others. His emphasis on love as a dynamic relationship designed to foster mutual growth is more fully sociological than ideas on love as an emotional or psychological state. Furthermore, Maslow relates love to society.

meat or drink, if that were possible." True love, and noble life, consists in pursuing beauty "with the eye of the mind," bringing forth thereby "not images of beauty, but realities (for he has hold not of an image but of reality) and bringing forth and nourishing true virtue to become the friend of God and be immortal if mortal man may" (Plato, 1964: 55-56).

Maslow associates B-Love (Being-Love, or what Fromm calls "mature love") with Ruth Benedict's concept of high synergy. Benedict suggested that non-aggression is conspicuous in societies where an individual's acts simultaneously serve his or her interests and group interests. Individuals in such societies are not selfish; rather, social arrangements make individual and group interests identical. In such "high synergy" societies, "... institutions insure mutual advantage from their undertakings"; in "low synergy" societies, "... the advantage of one individual becomes a victory over another, and the majority who are not victorious must shift as they can" (Maslow, 1971:202).<sup>5</sup> Maslow considers high synergy a good definition of Being-Love. He refers to Being-Love as "the high love relationship," and defines it as "... the expansion of the self, the person, the identity." Love of the self and love of the other are viewed as interdependent; Being-Love stresses the dependence of self-actuali-

<sup>5</sup>In physiology, the term "synergy" is used to refer to the "co-ordinate action of separate elements." Hault (1969: 327) credits Lester Ward with suggesting that the term synergy be used in sociology "... to denote the unintended cooperative action [and the organizations and other cultural products resulting from such cooperative action] in which people often engage as they pursue their own individual interests." Benedict's usage seems to have this denotation. Maslow's usage more clearly reflects the conception of synergy as enhancement, in the sense that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts." This implies that "true" cooperation, that is, conscious, planned cooperation, can have synergistic effects.

zation on facilitative love relationships (Maslow, 1971: 209). By linking individuals (self-actualizers) and evolving societies (high synergy societies), Maslow associates love with adaptability at the individual, group, and sociocultural levels. This provides an initial rationale for considering the evolutionary significance of love. The variety of phenomena generally referred to as "love" may reflect the presence of a potential in human beings for high levels of communication and cooperation. New levels in the actualization of this potential, reflected in new levels of interpersonal intimacy, may be a necessary condition for the further evolution of life and consciousness on earth.<sup>6</sup> Sorokin,

<sup>6</sup>The assumption is that the B-Love relationship is full, deep, and intense. Incidentally, the question arises, on the adult level, whether more than one such relationship is necessary or possible, at any one time, or over a lifetime. Given (1) limited time and energy, (2) the need to break down barriers (defenses) within, between, and among people that obstruct honest, valid, meaningful communication and perception, and (3) the idea that some type of deep, full intense relationship is a necessary condition of self-actualization, it seems realistic to assume that people should seek lifelong, monogamous relationships. Such "core relationships" are not conceived to be exclusive in any of the traditional ways associated with monogamy (e.g., sexually). They are, however, conceived to be exclusive in the depth, fullness, and intensity of the love-commitment shared by the "core" partners. This does not preclude B-Love outside the core; but no relationship outside the core will manifest the same degree and extent of commitment. Theoretically, a core commitment *might* be possible among three or more highly self-actualized persons. See

and more recently, Gorney, have explicitly linked love to sociocultural evolution.

### *Love and Sociocultural Evolution*

Sorokin used the term love loosely. He did not define love formally, but referred to it as "the concentrated form of life." Sorokin (1973: 238-244) noted a tendency in modern society to be skeptical of, and to disbelieve in, the power of "creative love." Love was widely considered "epiphenomenal and illusory," and referred to (with other virtues such as friendship, cooperation, truth, goodness, and beauty) as a rationalization, self-deception, derivation, ideology, or "idealistic bosh."<sup>7</sup> Sorokin referred to "a vast body of evidence" supporting his notion of the power of creative love, friendship, nonviolence, and nonaggression in society. He cited "typical cases" illustrating the power of creative love to

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the contributions by O'Neill and O'Neill (1972) and Mazur (1973) to the emerging theory of monogamous commitment. For a theory of self-disclosure that asserts well-being depends on being able to disclose oneself fully and honestly to at least one other person, see Jourard (1971). For a humanistic view of multilateral ("group") marriages, see Constantine and Constantine (1973).

<sup>7</sup>With reference to discussions of "altruism" and evolution, which I comment on in n. 9, such pessimism and cynicism is still being expressed. Alexander (1975), for example, hypothesizes that biological evolution has selected among humans for the quality of being able to repress consciousness of selfishness, thereby producing a form of "sincere hypocrisy" (Campbell, 1975: 1112) which stands for altruism; see also Ghiselin (1974: 247).

(1) stop aggression and enmity, (2) promote vitality and longevity, (3) restore health and well-being, (4) support social movements, (5) foster individual growth, and (6) generate more love: love begets love, and hate begets hate. Sorokin's view of love as the main-spring of life and evolution is supported by many advocates of love as a survival value (e.g., Montagu, 1970: 2-3; Otto, 1972: 10). Most of them share Sorokin's propensity for generalizing on the basis of variable and sometimes questionable empirical examples, and without the benefit of a well-formulated theoretical position. Until recently, it is true, this area of inquiry has had to be sustained by provocative hypotheses in the face of underdeveloped and controversial theories of biological and sociocultural evolution. Recent advances in evolutionary theory have not entirely resolved the problems and controversies of the past. They have, however, made it possible to consider the relationship between love and sociocultural evolution somewhat more systematically. Roderic Gorney's work illustrates some of the progress that has been made.

Gorney (1973: 47) argues that love as a factor in evolution has its roots in the emergence of cell-proximity in primitive organisms as a survival mechanism. More complex forms of "colonial cooperation" followed: (1) cell collaboration and the emergence of multi-cellular animals; and (2) internal fertilization among amphibia and reptiles. More advanced cooperation made its appearance among the mammals. The placenta, mammary

glands, and long gestation and dependency periods added a new dimension to the struggle for survival; the survival of the young became dependent on extended caring behavior by one or more adults. Gorney refers to this new dimension as "individual love." Grouping behavior and sociation in the lower animals were transcended by the societal behavior of the higher mammals, which in turn was transcended by human societal organization and culture. Gorney (1973: 452-453) concludes that the next stage in human evolution will (1) free love from its traditional reproductive and nurturing functions, and (2) incorporate it into "... that part of the self-validating function which advances the fullest flowering of human potential by bringing individual people into intimate personal caring relationships with one another." He rejects traditional and romantic conceptions of love, as well as attempts by social scientists to define love in behavioral, attitudinal, or operational terms. Gorney (1973: 452) follows Montague (1970: 288-317) in defining love as "... the conferring of survival benefits upon another in a creatively enlarging manner." This suggests that love, in all its manifestations (in a variety of aborted, distorted and embryonic ways), reflects a cooperative principle that is becoming increasingly critical as a condition of sociocultural evolution. A sociological rationale for this idea is developed in the following section.

#### *An Evolutionary Sociology of Love*

Sociologists have not generally defined "society" in evolutionary

terms. But as Lenski (1970; and Lenski and Lenski, 1974) argues, society is an adaptive mechanism which has increased the survival and reproductive chances of certain organisms.<sup>8</sup> Lenski thus adds society to the list of more familiar adaptive mechanisms in animals such as speed, strength, agility, intelligence, and coloration. Society is characterized by relatively sustained ties of interaction, a high degree of interdependence among its members, and a high degree of autonomy. This form of organization, among all primates including humans, has survival value because it enhances learning opportunities.

Lenski (1970: 17) defines learning as "... that process which manifests itself by changes in behavior (usually adaptive in nature) based on prior experience." Learning depends on some degree of cooperation between and among individuals. There has been some debate, however, concerning the relative importance of cooperation and competition in evolution. At least since Piotr Kropotkin's work on *Mutual Aid* (1902), there has been interest in study of, and speculation about the proposition that cooperation in the animal world has been equal to or exceeded competition as an important principle of survival and adaptation. Proponents of this position can draw on innumerable cases of parasitism, symbiosis, and even the eugenic

<sup>8</sup>This is not the same as a theory of societal evolution, which has been part of the sociological scene from Marx and Spencer to Parsons and Lenski. Lenski not only sees society as a *unit* of evolution but as an *adaptive and evolutionary mechanism*.

improvement of a species on account of a predator's success in killing inferior individuals. All animals, including humans, have developed substitutes for life-and-death struggle ranging from population control to the use of threat and retreat instead of war (Darlington, 1971: 458; Mather, 1970: 7, 13).<sup>9</sup> The most compelling

<sup>9</sup>Etkin (1964: 6-7, 33), in a study of social organization among vertebrates, points out a paradox. Natural selection, he writes, "... must be expected to favor self-seeking, 'antisocial' actions by the individual." This would tend to be socially disruptive. But group formation is quite common in vertebrates. Etkin concludes that there must be controls that keep aggressive, competitive behavior from interfering with sociality. He cites dominance hierarchy and territoriality as two such controls. His attempt to dismiss "... earnest and well-meant efforts to show that cooperative behavior has survival value" is not convincing. The evidence he cites suggests that controls against aggression and competition emerge with social organization. It is plausible to argue that these controls can, at the sociocultural level, be elaborated to the point where a transition occurs; cooperation becomes more important in survival than competition. Furthermore, a change in the nature of "natural selection" can be expected, such that groups or collectivities are selected by virtue of the relevance of their values and modes of social organization to survival. The process becomes quite complex when we add consciousness, and human efforts to "select" in terms of what they understand to be values and organizations that have high adaptive potential. Of course, the selection process might work in favor of individuals or collectivities whose short-term adaptive capacities are good (at least to the point of insuring their success in the "struggle for survival") but whose evolutionary potential is low. Assuming that the selection process works in favor of increasing evolutionary potential, the "ascendency of cooperation" principle does

arguments for the "ascendency of cooperation" assumption derive from ecological consciousness. A variety of crises in the animal, plant, and human communities has in recent times stimulated widespread awareness of the importance of cooperation in survival and evolution.<sup>10</sup>

not imply an end to competition. Under the conditions outlined in this paper, competition shifts to the collective level and involves struggles for power (command over resources) between more or less distinctive groups characterized by high and low levels of cooperation. We can also expect competition to operate among different types of high-cooperation groups. Salk's (1973) view of this process as a struggle between two value systems, one with high and one with low survival potential (in the long-term evolutionary sense) is somewhat oversimplified but instructive. The recent literature on group selection and the genetics of altruism, especially in Wilson (1975) and responses to Wilson and to the general concept of sociobiology is relevant to my argument, but cannot be treated extensively here. Cambell's (1975) review of this literature is noteworthy, but does not go as far as Dunn (1971) or Lenski (1970) and Lenski and Lenski (1974) in terms of proposing a theory of sociocultural evolution. Without the space for commenting on the altruism literature, I will simply note that the view of love I am presenting here can be interpreted as an emergent of (1) biological altruism, in which the individual sacrifices for the benefit of genetically related others in the group, and the later development of (2) human altruism, in which the interests of the other take precedence over self interest (Wispe and Thompson, 1976: 344). Fully developed, love as an evolutionary mechanism becomes manifested in a high synergy relationship wherein the distinction between selfish and selfless behavior is transcended or made irrelevant by social structural arrangements.

<sup>10</sup>For a view of the current human crisis

Lenski (1970: 63) defines sociocultural evolution as raising "the upper level of the capacity of human societies to mobilize energy and information." Cooperation is an evolutionary mechanism to the extent that it improves the capacity for mobilizing energy and information. The challenge to human survival which we see emerging and emergent in the world today is a challenge to our individual and collective capacities to mobilize energy and information through new forms and levels of cooperation. This implies new forms and levels of personal, interpersonal, and sociocultural organization. Maslow's ideas on high synergy can be interpreted as specifying the conditions which must be fostered in individuals, groups, and societies if new levels of energy and information mobilization are going to be reached. Love enters this argument as a significant bond between and among human beings. Sex may have been the basic bond that, early in the evolutionary process, made new levels of cooperation possible.

In the evolutionary process, *mutation* is the most important way in which simpler organisms cope with changing environments. For more complex living systems, the exchange of "genetic information"—*recombination*—among different organisms is the most important coping mechanism. More popularly, recombination is referred to as sex (Lenski, 1970: 52; Mayr, 1970: 25-26). It is plausible to hypothesize a third coping mechanism

associated with the emergence of culture as a vehicle of evolution; the exchange of information in symbolic communication between and among human beings. This can be viewed as an elaboration of recombination, or sex. One of the consequences of sexuality is that it makes extended intimacy possible. Through extended intimacy, human beings can expand their knowledge of themselves, others, and reality in general.<sup>11</sup>

Among humans, intimacy has been fostered by the generalization of sexual cycles, sexual codes, and the sexual imperative (reproduction). Human sexual relations are independent of an estrous cycle; they can violate cultural rules such as monogamy and heterosexuality; and the imperative can be "pleasure." Phenomena defined as "love" represent a first order cultural elaboration of sex. The identification of love with self-actualization, B-Love, and high synergy societies can be viewed as a second order cultural elaboration of love. This elaboration involves (1) defining love as a social relationship and social process in which

<sup>11</sup>This is, admittedly, a large intuitive leap. However, the notion of intersubjective testing in science may reflect the advantage of—and perhaps the necessity of—having plural relatively autonomous systems intercommunicate in order to maximize the capacity of individual minds to grasp the nature of reality. I am suggesting that the intersubjective bond, which is most effective when communication is open, honest, and, in a sense, intimate, can be viewed as a development from mere "primitive" bonds including sex. In any case, this notion is not crucial to my argument; the existence of conditions for extended intimacy, whatever they are, is what is important here.

as a problem in the ecology of consciousness, see Barron (1972).



the objective is to facilitate the viable functioning and development of individuals and groups, and (2) equating loving and knowing; "I love you" comes to mean "I want to know you, and I want you to know me," in the fullest sense of knowing. This implies gaining a perspective on the sociocultural, environmental, global, and ultimately cosmic settings of self and others. The elaboration and generalization of sex and love results in an expansion of the possibilities and expectations associated with loving relationships. Maslow's conception of B-Love defines a relationship that is more complex, diversified, and flexible than D-Love, or the love associated with traditional, relatively closed, and exclusive monogamous marriages. Complexity, diversity, and flexibility are widely recognized by students of ecological and evolutionary theory to be associated with adaptive and evolutionary potential in animal, plant, and human communities.<sup>12</sup> In brief, the opportunities for *learning* are enhanced in B-Love. Enhanced learning promotes adaptability. The consequence of associating B-Love with the synergic society, as Maslow does, is to create a link between love and the process of raising the information carrying capacity of human societies.

B-Love entails ecological and evolutionary consciousness. If we are committed, facilitative, and caring with respect to ourselves and others, we must necessarily be so with respect to human beings as ecological entities living in a

global network of ecological communities. And if we are involved in the process of identifying and actualizing human potentials, we must be aware of conditions that facilitate this process; and this necessarily involves seeing ourselves as active in and agents of an evolutionary process.

Love is a social relationship that implies committed, facilitative caring between or among individuals who also love themselves. It is a social process in which people get to know one another more and more intimately. This process, predicated on the self-actualization of the participants, is optimally lifelong. The generalization of love means that it is not dependent on particular sexual or marital styles and preferences, or restricted by age barriers. The precise nature of any love relationship can be considered a function of the psychosocial development of the participants. Love relationships will not always involve people at similar levels of psycho-social development, or with equitable access to and control over resources. A polar case of "inequitable love" is the love relationship between an adult and an infant.

Love can be considered a special case of cooperation. Cooperation is a social process in which individuals or groups work together toward a common goal(s). Love is a cooperative process involving two or more persons<sup>13</sup> committed to (1) facilitating each other's self-actuali-

<sup>12</sup>Anderson (1971: 18, 33); McHarg, (1969: 332); Bateson (1972: 494-505); Sahlins and Service (1960); Salk (1973).

<sup>13</sup>."Persons" is purposefully used here instead of "individuals" to emphasize that we are dealing with a fuller representation of the total self. In a "core commitment," the love relationship is ideally life-long, and involves *two* persons.

zation, and (2) achieving higher and more extensive degrees of intimacy. Intimacy refers to the degree to which barriers to (defenses against) intra- and interpersonal knowing have been penetrated.<sup>14</sup>

### *The Future of Intimate Relationships*

Ideas about the future of marriage and the family tend to reflect (1) American or Western values, (2) dissatisfaction with the present "wretched institution" of marriage, (3) projections of current "trends," (4) the desire to increase opportunities for individuals to choose marital, family, and sexual lifestyles, and (5) a concern for increasing the warmth and intensity of human relationships.<sup>15</sup> The socio-cultural contexts of marriages and families are rarely analyzed in depth. The implications of ecology and evolutionary theory for thinking about the future of marriage and the family have been virtually ignored.<sup>16</sup> The perspective outlined in this paper suggests that we need to broaden our conception of marriage and family; for this reason, I prefer to think in terms of intimate relationships. Ecology and evolutionary theory draw our attention to the fact

<sup>14</sup>The difficulties involved in breaking down intra- and interpersonal barriers make it unlikely that a group of three or more persons could attain the degree and extent of intimacy possible in a dyad. For this reason, "core commitment" refers to a two-person relationship. See n. 6.

<sup>15</sup>This section draws on Restivo and Restivo (1974: 101-107).

<sup>16</sup>For illustrative approaches to the future of marriage and the family, see Hamil (1971: 166-168); Davids (1971: 190-194); Bernard (1972).

that intimate relationships are ways in which human beings interact within the global ecosystem. Human survival and the enhancement of human living are threatened by increasing stresses in the global ecosystem. To relieve these stresses and create a viable world, we need to identify and experiment with alternative ways of relating to each other. We need to support experimentation with a wide variety of life-styles. This experimentation is the process through which appropriate forms of social organization have been and will continue to be developed in response to new ecological and evolutionary challenges. In supporting a variety of values and life-styles, we can and should be guided by criteria for evaluating their viability as adaptive and evolutionary systems. We should be ever-mindful of two questions: (1) to what extent do given ways of living promote full, intense, and humanizing intimacy between and among human beings; and (2) to what extent do they conform to the general principles for viable adaptive and evolutionary systems? The criteria for viability are being developed in ecological and evolutionary theory, and general systems and information theory. These theoretical developments support the need for open-ended living oriented to process and change.<sup>17</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Sociologists tend to conceive love in terms of a psychological-marital-heterosexual-romantic paradigm. The more general humanistic conception of love as a committed, facilitative, caring relationship lends itself to an evolu-

<sup>17</sup>See Restivo (1977).

tionary interpretation. Working from such a conception of love, Sorokin and Gorney suggest that love is an evolutionary mechanism. I have sketched a sociological rationale for an evolutionary view of love. This rationale is based on the idea that society and culture are evolutionary mechanisms; and that this reflects the increasing importance of a cooperative principle in an evolutionary process now dominated by sociocultural factors. I suggested that (1) love is a first order cultural elaboration of sex, (2) the generalized humanist conception of love is a second order cultural elaboration, (3) loving enhances learning and knowing, and (4) love is a manifestation of the cooperative principle in sociocultural evolution. The central idea that love is an evolutionary mechanism remains rooted in the speculative sociology inherited from Sorokin. There is, however, increasing evidence for this idea and an imperative for further discussion and research on love and sociocultural evolution. Theoretical bases for thinking about the future of intimacy and life-styles, conspicuously weak today, can be expected to emerge out of such discussions and research.

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