

LOVE

L'elisir d'Amore – The Elixir of Love An Opera by Donizetti

The Pleasure of Love last for a moment. Its sorrow lasts for a lifetime. – A French Folk Song - Plaisir d'Amour.

"Nothing, so it seems to me," said the stranger, "is more beautiful than the love that has weathered the storms of life... The love of the young for the young, that is the beginning of life. But the love of the old for the old, that is the beginning of ---of things longer. Jerome Klapa Jerome

Lovers who truly love do not write down their happiness. Anatole France

A tale without love is like beef without mustard: insipid. Anatole France

Love is the state in which man sees things most widely different from what they are. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways. Elizabeth Barrett Browning

I am a chemist. I can claim that profession because a number of years ago, an academic institution gave me some pieces of paper affirming that I had successfully passed all the prerequisites to allow me to make that assertion. I have often wondered why many of us define ourselves by our professions. I really do not think of myself as a chemist although I am currently employed by a pitiful college, teaching the stuff. I am remunerated reasonably well. They have even provided me with what passes for a laboratory. This college is a place for the wealthy to off-load their delinquent offsprings. It appears that these parents do not pay fees, but rather rent since these students evince no interest in their studies. My relationship with the students is an armed truce. As long as they behave with a minimum of civility they get a passing grade whether they merit it or not. After all, our role is to provide their parents what they have paid for, namely to be able to claim that their sons and daughters have earned an academic degree. Thus my teaching load is quite light and leaves me a great deal of leisure time. Shaw's famous dictum, "Those who know do. Those who do not, teach" is certainly applicable to me. As a chemist and as a professor, I have been a complete failure. That takes care of my so-called professional life.

In many ways my personal life is analogous to my professional career. Both are marked with substantive indifference. However, there is a major dissimilarity which I will get to shortly. I live alone, although I have attempted conjugal commitments on a number of occasions as well as numerous affairs with members of both genders, marked by unsatisfactory sex and total disinterest. Much to my chagrin I have learnt that love based on need just does not work. On the other hand I have unsuccessfully sought the ideal arrangement which, I think, is characterized by 'need' being based on 'love'. I am obsessed by this dream, so much so that I have become a sodden 'romantic'. I have read every romance novel, both contemporary and classic, that I could lay my hands on. I have subscribed to every relevant magazine, journal, and pulp fiction publication. I have attended countless experts on the subject. Without fail I follow the romantic exploits

of the rich and famous, especially but not exclusively of those working in the cinema. I am in love with 'love'.

The one thing that stands out is how temporary all these romantic idylls are and were. It appears that once the sexual bloom has withered, new mates are usually sought, found and in short order replaced. All this is most disconcerting. Is there truly a love affair that can last? That is the question to which I have been seeking an answer for a long time.

As is often the case, a unexpected occurrence led to an epiphany of sorts. I learnt about and subsequently attended a lecture by a well known biochemist. The lecture had been featured on the student campus bulletin board, something I rarely scanned. His lecture was titled 'The Biology of Love'. I had given very little consideration to the biology of human behavior because I thought that approach much too mechanistic. Since every other methodology had led me nowhere, I felt that I had nothing to lose and perhaps I might learn something that might prove illuminating. While he was not really all that enlightening he succeeded in getting me to rethink my problems concerning 'love'.

It is no secret that there are many chemicals and drugs that have a direct effect on the human nervous system with mind and behavior altering results. What struck me is whether there was a substance that would cause love to last over the lifetime of individuals. I found the question very intriguing. As is my nature I became obsessed with finding such a product. As far as I knew no one else had ever attempted to find or create this panacea. After all, I had earned a degree in chemistry with some knowledge of biochemistry and could finally put it to use.

I spent the next ten years seeking possible compounds. It required a rather large expenditure on various substances that often were difficult to acquire. As well I also managed to obtain the most up-to-date computers and other relevant technologies. I was fortunate that the college seemed to have unlimited funds and very poor auditing. No one questioned my new large budget probably because everyone else was just as guilty of expanding theirs.

I commenced by identifying all nearby couples who had been married for more than fifty years. I interviewed each of them to attempt to ascertain whether the reasons they had remained together was based on 'true love'. I found that most of these couples had remained married for economic reasons or because they were fearful of being alone in their old age, or because their religion forbade divorce and finally because they were simply too proud to admit that their marriage was a failure. There were about six couples that appeared to have marriages that were based on true affection. Unfortunately I was not able to pinpoint anything either environmentally, physiologically, bio-chemically or genetically that was common to them. I had to abandon this approach.

Then I carefully examined all known substances that had an immediate effect on the nervous system, with particular emphasis on the brain. There are far more of them than what most know. I isolated those that showed the most promise. Then I altered their molecular structures and blind-tested each using pure bred non-monogamous animals to see whether there was an effect on their libidos leading to permanent relationships. This was a slow and arduous task with only negative results. However I was certain that my efforts would prevail and after ten years they did.

I accidentally stumbled upon this compound that showed remarkable results. I had inadvertently let one of my samples stand in the sunlight for about six hours. There must have been an absorption of solar heat and/or rays causing a change in the original substance. I was just about ready to discard it when I decided that I had nothing to lose if I tested it as I had all the others. Actually I expected nothing. The animals immediately available were a male and female dog in heat that previously had shown no interest in each other. They copulated in a perfunctory manner but when done they remained in heat, repeating the act three more times. Normally they would have gone their separate ways. When the sex act was ended they continued to show affection for each other for three more days. When more of the substance was administered that affectionate behavior simply continued indefinitely. Then I tried it on about ten other pairs of different animals with similar results. One can imagine how exciting these results were for me.

I was now ready to try it on myself. However I needed a partner. One of my co-professors was and still is rather beautiful and very intelligent. To my knowledge she had coldly rejected all male advances. I felt that breaking through that icy demeanor would be enough proof of the effectiveness of my discovery. At lunch one day, I noticed her alone at a table for two. I asked if I could join her. Much to my surprise she motioned for me to sit down. Perhaps she was aware of my indifference to the institution and everyone in it. After I had eaten my sandwich I asked her if I could get her a cup of tea. She nodded. This gave me the occasion to spike both our drinks with my compound in amounts that would endure. Two days later we eloped and have remained together ever since.

Next, I approached someone I knew to be very good at marketing innovative products. After the regulatory authorities had examined my creation for toxicity and found it to be perfectly safe, he was able to promote it as a panacea for dispirited couples. Suffice to say, it took off like a bombshell and within two years had become a world wide success, making me one of the wealthiest persons alive. Although many attempted to copy it, no one succeeded.

Some of the immediate positive sociological effects were;

- Divorce rates plummeted, leaving many lawyers without the lucrative incomes they once had been able to squeeze out of unhappy couples.
- Aggressive behavior practically disappeared so that crime rates fell to levels never before achieved and enmity between nations became a thing of the past. Again lawyers were adversely affected as well as a good part of police forces, professional military, the judiciary, and the bureaucracy.
- Since a great deal of stress had now been removed from the lives of most, health problems were largely diminished leaving the medical profession with more time to engage in necessary medical research.
- Violence in sports disappeared making them civilized events with an upbeat and aesthetic manifestation.

The preceding are just some of the affirmative effects that occurred. Unfortunately there were some negative ones that turned out to be devastating.

- The birth rate and thus the earth's population became unsustainably high. The environmental impact is alarming.
- Healthy economic competition just about vanished so that ground-breaking, inventive and novel products that may have been of great benefit were never fashioned.

- The fabulous affection that was and is ever present has also led to a torpor amongst all who have been taken this drug. It may mean that some uncivilized tribes who had never been exposed to modernity could take over. I shudder to think of what that could lead to.

It is now evident that a 'technological assessment' on my seemingly fabulous drug had never been carried out. A wise sage once remarked, "Every new technology has the potential for being used in a good and a bad manner. Most assuredly humans will find a way to use them for both.

Even though I have been afflicted with both the positive and negative, I am determined to find a way to reverse the effects of my discovery. I hope it is possible although I now have serious doubts. I recently discovered that my compound altered the DNA of all living things that had been exposed to it so that newborns have inherited these traits. It seems that the course of evolution has been acutely affected. What the future holds for the human race is questionable.

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