

The Value of Love

An infant entering the world desperately needs love. Someone must continually care for its well-being. Through the years of childhood, psychologists point out, nothing is so important as that the child is loved. Teenagers seek parents who lovingly understand them. A popular song makes it even more general, "What the world needs now is love, real love."

The editor of the *Great Books of the Western World*, Robert Hutchins, finds that all the books included except possibly those in mathematics and the physical sciences, are represented in references to love. In one of its many forms, he adds, "love is omnipresent in every human life."⁶ Again, "There seems to be no happiness more perfect than that which love confirms. But there is also no misery more profound, no depth of despair greater, than that into which lovers are plunged when they are bereft, disappointed, unrequited."⁷

What is true of Western literature is true in considerable degree also in the East, as James A. Mohler shows in *Dimensions of Love: East and West*. "Without love," a Hindu source says, "man is just skin and bones."⁸ Three major love themes are found in Hinduism: *kama*, interested sensual love; *bhakti*, disinterested love of God; and *shakti*, imitating the love embrace of Shiva and Shakti in creative restraint.⁹

Where love is wanting, all else is inconsequential. An analysis of meaningful human experience could not overlook this the highest of all human values, the value that makes all else worthwhile.

The Data of Experience

An analysis of human knowing shows that it involves given data plus the mind's interpretation. In spite of the many factors which relativize the knowing process, claims to truth go beyond one's arbitrary opinion. Valid knowledge involves more than "subjective certitude." It involves "objective validity." Valid knowledge interacts with the relevant givens presented to knowers by entities beyond themselves. Even those who call the observable world *maya* (illusory), I found in India, must watch the traffic lights and treat illness!

Our knowledge is not limited to experiential reactions (phenomena) and entirely divorced from the givens themselves, as phenomenologists propose. Ben Kimpel argues, "A distinction must be made between knowledge which consists of interpretations and knowledge which is exclusively of interpretations."¹⁰ Some interpretations, furthermore, are better informed than others. Only by referring to given data can comparisons between differing interpretations be resolved. Neither Immanuel Kant, nor anyone else has made it fully clear that our knowledge is only of interpretations and not of reality itself."¹¹

Similarly, all our knowledge, upon analysis is not limited to subjective opinion or conditioned responses. There is a subjective aspect to human experience. "But maintaining that this aspect of experience is the exclusive