

Prunesquallor's Theory of Love

By Oliver Twit

"I spent the first part of my life studying female personality and neurosis, and now along comes love," Dr. Prunesquallor says.

Prunesquallor, the leading authority on female personality, has made a name for himself as one of the foremost theoreticians and researchers in the field of human relations but in recent years he has turned a good deal of his attention to the study of love.

He analyzed various love relations and proposed a revolutionary tetrahedral theory of love. According to Prunesquallor's new theory, love has four components: biological, emotional, cognitive, and motivational. Different aspects of love can be explained in terms of four faces of tetrahedron.

Prunesquallor calls the biological aspect of love tetrahedron passion. The emotional face of the tetrahedron is intimacy. The cognitive face is commitment. The motivational face is self-preservation. Self-preservation includes such things as having kids, making money, feeding the family, and staying out of trouble. These four faces, however, only exist in the imaginary world. He calls this the virtual tetrahedron. The volume of this tetrahedron corresponds to the amount of love; the shape corresponds to the style.

The virtual tetrahedron, however, is a figment of one's imagination; in reality, it is just a perceptual mirage of the real tetrahedron. In the real world, according to Prunesquallor, the biological face of

the real love tetrahedron is neurosis. This, Prunesquallor says, explains why the passionate people are mostly neurotic. The emotional face is power. "Power," says Prunesquallor, "attracts intimacy. Let's face it — it's sexy." The cognitive face is stupidity. "Only stupid people make commitments and keep them." Finally, the motivational face is represented by money. "Making money is what makes life meaningful. To survive in this world, you need a lot of money." This is the real tetrahedron, which exists in the real world. Again, the volume of the real tetrahedron represents the amount of love; its shape, the style of love.

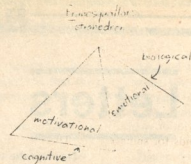
The virtual love tetrahedron is really the image of the real love tetrahedron as seen through the plane of perception. As one watches more soap operas or one is dumped by dates, the virtual love tetrahedron just vanishes, allowing one to clearly observe the four faces of the real love tetrahedron. But, not all four faces of the tetrahedron are equally important. The base of the love tetrahedron is the cognitive face, which appears in the form of either commitment or stupidity. The superstructure of the love tetrahedron is made up of the other three faces. Even if the superstructure collapses, the base remains.

Prunesquallor has even assigned colors to the faces of his love tetrahedrons. For the real love tetrahedron, all four faces are green, which probably is related to the color of American dollar bills. How-

ever, emotional, cognitive, and motivational faces of the virtual love tetrahedron respectively. When asked why his love tetrahedrons have colors, Prunesquallor replied "It makes my theory of love more colorful and interesting. If you don't like my colors, you can pick your own favorite colors."

"However, there has been a dramatic change in the real world, requiring a quantum leap in all the theories of love," says Prunesquallor. "Since AIDS was discovered to be transmitted through the AIDS virus, all the past theories of love have simply collapsed." It was like a tornado, blowing away the entire superstructure. Prunesquallor's love tetrahedrons collapsed into their bases, leaving only the cognitive face behind. In the imaginary world, what remains is commitment, which is really just stupidity in the real world. Prunesquallor admits his theory of love in the post-AIDS era is too barren and empty. "I may be wrong. But, it's not my fault." It the cure for AIDS is found, it will rebuild the superstructure and restore the love tetrahedron to its former glory.

Prunesquallor, with a solemn face, told me to advise young men and women not to fall in love at the present time in this post-AIDS era. "Every time you fall in love, you are risking your life. Without life, even the greatest of loves can die."



The Three Faces of Love

The following is a summary of an article by Robert J. Trotter about Sternberg's three-side theory of love, which appeared in the Sept. issue of *Psychology Today*.

Dr. Robert J. Sternberg, IBM Professor of Psychology and Education at Yale University has made a name for

himself as one of the foremost theoreticians and researchers in the field of human intelligence but in recent years he has turned a good deal of his attention to the study of love. He has earned the appellation "love professor" out of this study.

He analyzed various relationships to figure out what differentiates romantic love from companionate love, from liking, from infatuation and from various other types of love. According to Sternberg's new triangular theory of love, love has emotional, motivational, and cognitive components. And different aspects of love can be explained in terms of these components.

Sternberg calls the emotional aspect of his love triangle intimacy. It includes such things as closeness, sharing, communication, and support. Intimacy increases rather steadily at first, then at a slower rate until it eventually levels off and goes beneath the surface.

The motivational side of the triangle is passion, which leads to the physiological arousal and an intense desire to be united with the loved one. Unlike intimacy, passion develops quickly. Passion is like an addiction, Sternberg says. Addiction can be rapid, but once habituation sets in, even an increased amount of exposure to the person or substance no longer stimulates the motivations arousal that was once possible.

The cognitive side of Sternberg's love triangle is commitment, both with a short-term decision to love another

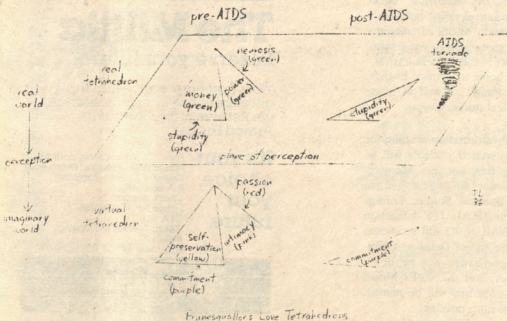
person and a long-term commitment to maintain that love. Essentially, commitment starts at zero when you first meet the other person and grows as you get to know each other. As the relationship continues, the amount of commitment will generally level off.

Levels of intimacy, passion, and commitment change over time, and so do relationships. You can visualize this, says Sternberg, by considering how the love triangle changes in size and shape as the three components of love increase and decrease. The triangle's area represents the amount of love and its shape and style. Large amounts of intimacy, passion, and commitment, for example, yield a large triangle. And in general, Sternberg says the larger the triangle, the more the love. Changing the length of the individual sides yield four differently shaped triangles, or styles of love. A triangle with three equal sides represents what Sternberg calls a "balanced" love in which all three components are equally matched.

Sternberg admits that this love triangle is a simplification of a complex and subtle phenomenon. Beyond that, he says, every relationship involves several triangles. In addition to their own triangles both people have an ideal triangle and a perceived triangle. He found that satisfaction is closely related to the similarity between these real, ideal, and perceived triangles. In general, the closer they are in shape and size, the more satisfying the relationship.

If you decide to take steps to improve a relationship, Sternberg offers a final triangle, the action triangle. The way we act shapes the way we feel and think, possibly as much as the way we think and feel shapes the way we act.

"The point," Sternberg concludes, "is that it is necessary to take into account the



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