

Philosophy as the Wisdom of Love

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Abstract

The author argues that love should play a central role in philosophy (and ethics). In the past, philosophical practice has been too narrowly defined by theory and explanation. Although unquestionably important, they do not belong to the very core of our philosophizing. Philosophy is primarily a way of life, centered on the soul and the development of our humanity – in its most diverse aspects and to its utmost potential. For such a life to be possible, love must play a central role in philosophy and philosophy should be understood not in the traditional sense as “the love of wisdom,” but in a new way – as the wisdom of love.

Keywords: ethics of aspiration, biophilia, ethics, soul, Kant, love, wisdom

I

Why does love play such a peripheral, virtually irrelevant, role in philosophy? Is it because of the way we practice philosophy? Or because of how we understand love?

The original meaning of the word philosophy is “love of wisdom.” The way philosophy has been practiced for centuries hardly leaves any room for wisdom. And if philosophy is not about wisdom, love seems to have no role to play in it either.

Wisdom is concerned with a general understanding of what it means to be a human being and live like a human being. Against Aristotle’s overly intellectualistic interpretation of wisdom, which distances it from the world of lived experience, I interpret wisdom as having to do with our fundamental moral commitment. As I have argued elsewhere, “wisdom is a primal moral disposition, a commitment of a person to the richness of life in general, including his [or her] life and the lives of others” (Cicovacki, 2014, p. 141). If wisdom were of crucial importance, then philosophical anthropology would have been the central philosophical discipline. Yet a proper philosophical anthropology, that is, philosophical anthropology as a normative discipline, has not yet been developed (Cicovacki, 1997). Instead, men are studied as if they were animals.

While there were many philosophers who have contributed some insights toward the establishment of philosophical anthropology as a philosophical discipline, the most significant contribution has arguably been made by Immanuel Kant. Like no other philosopher, he insists that the question: ‘What is man?’ is the ultimate question of philosophy. He furthermore states that the other three central philosophical questions: ‘What can I know?’ ‘What ought I to do?’ and ‘What may I hope?’ all reduce to the question: What is man? This question is ultimate not because it should lead us to some definitive theoretical insight, but because it has to make us realize whom we are and open our vision for what we could, and perhaps should, become. Kant thus implies that philosophy has to involve thought and theory, but that it should not be limited to them. Philosophy must include an active attempt to realize the envisioned ideals of humanity; it must integrate values, thoughts, and action. As Kant puts it, a genuine philosopher is “the teacher of wisdom through doctrine *and* example” (Kant, 1992, p. 537).

It is significant to notice, however, that this “ultimate” question is raised by Kant only in his lectures on logic and never in any of his three *Critiques*. It is also important to recall that, despite being a prolific writer, nowhere does Kant offer his answer to what he pronounces to be the

ultimate question of philosophy. Most important of all, like all modern and post-modern philosophy, Kant's philosophy hardly provides any sufficient ground for a comprehensive understanding of the nature of humanity; neither does he explain how wisdom should order a human life. The reason why this is the case is indicative of the peripheral role of love in philosophy.

Kant asks: What is man? Posing the question in this way reveals a few important points. In Kant's opus, and in Western philosophy in general, the question of man is raised within the framework of a body-soul dualism. For Kant, this is not just a narrow question of the relationship of an individual body to an individual soul. When considered at the most general level, the world has been divided into the world's body and the world's soul. The world's body is the visible and tangible stuff "out there", Descartes' "*res extensa*" (=extended thing). The world's soul is composed of all these immaterial forces and divine energies that move invisibly, "in the wind" as it were. The words for wind, soul, and breath co-mingle in virtually every Indo-European language, which perhaps only adds to our confusion as to what that world's soul really is. Is the soul a thing? Since we think in terms of nouns, we tend to conceive of it as a thing. Yet it is more like a non thing. Instead of treating it like Locke's "*tabula rasa*" (=blank slate), we can rather designate the mystery of the invisible soul-force by the Greek word for wind and breath: "*pneuma*"; even though it is also a noun, *pneuma* suggests a movement and a verb, rather than something static and unchanging, which we usually associate with nouns and things (Young, 1992).

For the last four centuries, we have followed the lead of science in trying to understand the world (another noun word) and the things of which it is composed. In the words of the poet William Blake, our entire culture has fallen into "a single vision and Newton's sleep". Science works because the things we dissect are visibly "out there", to confirm or falsify our thoughts about them. Science also works because it is based on thoughts and hard evidence, rather than on emotions, intuitions, or insights. It works because it can approach things from the outside and penetrate into their internal structure.

By its very nature, the soul poses a different problem. It seems hard or impossible to penetrate it from the outside, at least insofar as we want to rely on a science-like approach. Both rational thoughts and scientific experiments seem to bounce off the soul, without grasping what it is. Yet the internal feelings, intuitions, or insights on which we depend for an inside-out realization seem unreliable when brought before the bar of science. We are thus left without knowledge of the soul, at least not in the same way that we can have knowledge of the body.

There seem to be only two ways of solving this impasse. We can either deny the existence of the soul altogether, or we can turn it into a thing, and, with renewed vigor, approach it the same way we analyze other things belonging to the world's body. The first tactic does not work, because despite all efforts to get rid of the soul, it resurfaces again not only in religion but also in arts and individual experiences. The second approach has become dominant in modern philosophy. The father of modern philosophy, Descartes, did not say: "I have a soul, therefore I am," nor "I care for my soul, therefore I am", but "I think, therefore I am" and what I think about and what I am is a "*res cogitans*" (=a thinking thing), the thing we now call the mind. The thing called the mind can be analyzed (almost, not entirely) in the way in which material things "out there" can be dissected: from outside-in, without emotions, in terms of quantifiable and objectively observable properties (of the brain). The world's soul thereby becomes a part of the world's body, just as an individual soul can be regarded as a part of an individual body. Bodies have no need for wisdom; they need to be pushed around, manipulated, and controlled. Their

relationship is causal and mechanical, not teleological and intentional. Since love does not lead to control and domination, and since it is not an instrument of knowledge – it even appears to stand in the way of objective knowledge – love disappears from modern philosophy. It simply has no role to play in our attempts to understand the world’s body as a whole, nor does it seem to be able to contribute anything to our philosophical attempts to answer the question: What is man?

II

There is still a window of opportunity open, and this is why we must look to ethics. As a philosophical discipline, ethics deals with the behavior and attitudes of human beings toward themselves, and toward each other. Unquestionably, love is important in understanding how we relate to ourselves and to each other. Should not, then, love play a prominent role in ethics?

The answer is: even if it should, it does not. Modern ethics is a morality of conduct. Its two most popular representatives, utilitarianism and consequentialism, do not exclude love from their considerations, but love plays no significant role in them. These two (closely related, although not identical) theoretical approaches to ethics emphasize usefulness and consequences. Insofar as love can be useful, or lead to beneficial results, it can contribute to the realization of something good. But this contribution is accidental. Love can just as well lead toward harmful relationships, or result in suffering, jealousy, and other undesirable outcomes.

Kant attempts to build up an ethical theory on benevolent intentions and moral grounds alone (Kant, 1993). Yet insofar as his ethical system is developed as a deontological ethics and focuses on duties, obligations, the moral law and the categorical imperative, it precludes any significant role of love. Love can never be a duty, nor can it be commanded. Insofar as love is understood as an emotion, it is one of the inclinations Kant wants to exclude from his ethics. He wants ethics to be rationally founded and resemble mathematics as much as possible (Kant, 2002).

Despite such tendencies that preclude the role of love, Kant begins his ethical theory with the claim that good will is the only unconditionally good thing in the world (Kant, 1993). Good will is understood in terms of good intentions, and is akin to love, broadly understood. Thus the door for the role of love is not entirely closed. The language of good will is the language of benevolence, of care for our own affairs and the affairs of others. Will – and good will even more so than will in general – directs us toward what we earlier called the world’s soul, and the soul is essentially dealing with movement, with desire, with intention. Yet Kant does not want it that way. He ties the will to reason – to practical reason – and makes it something akin to the intelligence used in our dealings with the world’s body (Kant, 1993; 2002). Although Kant claims the supremacy of practical over theoretical reason, his ethics strays too far from the loving care and concerns of one human being for another (Cicovacki, 1997).

Kant is so much under the influence of Newton’s establishment of the laws of nature that he tries, analogously, to establish laws of morality. Even when parallelism is not understood in such unadulterated terms, the modern ethics of conduct is conceived of in terms of fundamental principles and rules. Kantian ethics is further understood in terms of the gap between “is” and “ought”, and in terms of actions that can be determined as right or wrong.

Hannah Arendt contributes significantly to our realization that this ethical orientation is misguided. As a response to the trial of Adolf Eichmann with regard to his role in the Holocaust, Arendt coined the phrase: “banality of evil” (Arendt, 2006). It was not the case that Eichmann did not understand the ethical rules and principles (including Kant’s categorical imperative) nor, more importantly, that he acted from malevolence (the ill will). It is rather that Eichmann was a

thoughtless bureaucrat, someone who functioned as a cog in a powerful machine and simply followed orders from anyone above him in the hierarchy.

Arendt's account of evil, and its implication for a proper grasp of love, is supplemented by Tzvetan Todorov and Erich Fromm (Todorov, 1996; Fromm, 1992). By analyzing moral life in the German WWII concentration camps, Todorov first comes to the conclusion that the Holocaust itself was a manifestation of two serious problems of the contemporary world: depersonalization and fragmentation. By focusing almost exclusively on the world's body, we turn the whole world into something soul-less, valueless, and meaningless. The next step, which Todorov believes occurred in the twentieth century, is the transformation of that soul-less, valueless, and meaningless creature into an internally divided being. Just as there is a split between the body and the soul, we also notice a further fragmentation of human mental capacities. One and the same person can be indifferent to the murder of the thousands of innocent inmates and yet be touched to tears by a piece of music, or a beautiful landscape. In such fragmented personalities, genocide is made bearable because victims are not thought of as human beings but as things. They are depersonalized and treated as statistical units and numbers, bodies and things. When this is the case, what matters is whether the quota of these "things" sent daily into gas chambers satisfies the orders given by superiors, and neither the experiences of these people in the chambers nor the reasons why are they sent there in the first place.

In opposition to the ("masculine and rational") ethics of the principles, followed by the organizers, administrators, and guards of the concentrations camps, Todorov recognizes a different ("feminine and sentimental") kind of ethics among the inmates, the ethics of "sympathy". This ethical attitude focuses on care and sensitivity, which leads us back not only to Kant's good will, but also to love in a broad sense.

In an attempt to understand how the Holocaust was possible, Fromm coined a distinction between "*necrophilia*" and "*biophilia*". The depersonalization that Todorov observed in the concentration camp has become a prevailing fact of life in our civilization, although in less drastic and sometimes less obvious forms. Life is always dynamic, like the "windy soul of the world"; it always brings changes and transformations. Dead things are static, unemotional, and indifferent. We turn living beings into dead things, or treat them as such, because they are then easier to manipulate and control.

Fromm dissociates biophilia from the controlling and hoarding tendencies of modern man and our obsession with the sacredness of material goods. He relates biophilia to a productive orientation of character. This creative orientation does not manifest itself in the fabrication of new things but in loving interaction with others, with a sense of brotherhood with everything alive. For Fromm, love of life is the foundation of all positive values. The person who loves life is attracted by the process of growth in all spheres of life. Such a person prefers to construct rather than retain. A biophile wants to mold and influence by love, reason, and personal example; s/he will not act not by force, neither by mutilating bodies and poisoning souls, nor by the bureaucratic manner of administering people as if they are things.

Although Fromm does not say so the banality of evil that Arendt talks about is the banality not only of thoughtlessness, but of indifference. Put differently, just as the opposite of goodness need not be malevolence, the opposite of love need not be hatred. Indifference can be far more deadly for love than hatred – a lack of concern and interest, insensibility and apathy. It is possible for people not to violate any moral law, it is possible for them not to entertain any malevolent intention, but yet be evil, just as they may be spiritually dead. This is why the dominant ethics of principles needs to be redirected, and in this lies a possibility of opening the

door for love to play a significant role in ethics and in our understanding of what it means to live like a dignified human being. But in which direction should we, then, turn our philosophical ethics?

I believe that the past holds the key for an understanding of who we are: of what our nature is and how we should live and when we look at the past, we always return to the two sources that shape us culturally: Christianity and Ancient Greece. In the Christian tradition we find compassion for the suffering of our neighbors as the foundation of our ethical behavior. Compassion by itself is not sufficient to cover the whole range of ethical behavior. But in this tradition we also find the love of God, insofar as God is understood as the highest value and outside of the purely human framework, which thereby gives us a measuring stick for who we are – a point of reference and a sense of identity.

In the Greek tradition the emphasis was on *eros*, the predecessor of what we now oversimplify and understand in terms of romantic love. We also recognize there the focus on virtue and on becoming as virtuous as one can be – as excellent as we can be as human beings. Alasdair MacIntyre revives our interest in this tradition by calling it the “ethics of virtue” (MacIntyre, 1984). Unfortunately, his focus on virtue unnecessarily narrows that which the Greek tradition was about. I find more congenial an interpretation of this tradition in terms of what Richard Taylor calls the “ethics of aspiration” (which also squares well with Fromm’s *biophilia*). This ethics of aspiration can serve as our umbrella concept for understanding not only of how love can play a role in philosophy, but – more importantly – how it can lead us to a fuller understanding of how to live as human beings (Taylor, 1970).

III

Love is an enormously complex phenomenon. The ancient Greek tradition distinguishes between *eros*, *storge* (familial-type love), *xenia* (stranger love), *philia* (communal and friendship based love), and *agape* (self-sacrificial and even unconditional love). The Christian tradition emphasizes love of one’s neighbor (merciful love), but does not neglect the love of oneself (“Love thy neighbor as you love thyself!”) and the love of God. More modern authors speak about romantic love, love between parent and child, brotherly love, erotic love, self-love, love of God, and love of the world. What could these various manifestations of love have in common?

We can come closer to answering this question if we first remove some of the typical misunderstandings with regard to love. Perhaps the most damaging of them is that love is an irrational, irresistible passion; we neither cannot control whether or not we feel it, nor say how long and with what intensity it may last. Especially in its erotic-romantic versions, this irrational passion has also been tied to finding the right object of love and falling in love. Freud goes even further, by trying to “naturalize” love and reduce it to sexual instinct and desire for sexual satisfaction. He contrasts love as a biological-instinctual drive with the civilizational drive that wants to control, repress, and sublimate this libidinal energy for the sake of social order and stability.

Although Freud is wrong in taking libidinal energy as the main motivator behind all we do, he is right to point out that love is not a thing. We use a noun to talk about it, but there is nothing static and thing-like about love; love is not a piece of the furniture of the world’s body. Due to its energy-like and drive-like quality, many who criticize Freud talk about love in terms of action; hence they speak about benevolent action, or, more generally, use a verb to express the presence of love (e.g., I love you). This approach to love is still misleading. Love is not an action of any specific, or even a specifiable kind. Running is an action and it is clear what it involves. Helping

others, say by bringing them food or medication, is also an action, but it can be done without love.

What we have not sufficiently understood so far is that love concerns far less the “who” and the “what” than the “how”. Put differently, love is better captured as an adverb than as a noun or a verb. We can come far closer to the essence of love when we emphasize not a particular person and a particular action, but a way of acting: whatever we do, we can do lovingly. Love essentially deals with how we relate; to ourselves, other people, and the world as a whole.

The second important point is that love need not be irrational at all. Insofar as it deals with the “how”, love is an attitude and an aspiration, which we can consciously and systematically develop and practice. Fromm certainly makes a good point when he speaks about “the art of loving”, and then claims that such an art relies on care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge. He furthermore correctly emphasizes that the mastery of this (and any other) art requires discipline, concentration, patience, and making the mastery of this art our supreme concern. There is no direct way of learning the art of loving, just as there is no direct way of becoming happy; it is something that can be mastered and practiced indirectly. We become the practitioners and masters of this art by developing a loving personality and building a productive and creative character (Fromm, 1956).

We can now reaffirm that love has far more to do with the soul than with the body. Since we do not know how to deal with the ambiguities of the soul – that of the world as well as our own – it is not unexpected that we have been so confused about the nature of love, nor is it surprising that love has played such a negligible role in modern and post-modern philosophy. Even if we keep deceiving ourselves that we can reduce the mind’s thinking to the world’s body, it is more difficult to sustain a similar illusion with regard to love. However popular and widely admired, Freud’s attempt to reduce love to sex is a clear failure. Despite Freud, there is so little of love that reduces to sex, just as there is so much about love that has nothing whatsoever to do with sex.

IV

If love is a matter of the soul and if loving is an art that has to be mastered and practiced, what is the relevance of love for ethics?

If love is a matter of the soul, it has to deal with the movement which we call will, or desire, or intention. As such, love must be relevant for any ethical theory that recognizes the core of ethical values in the will, motivation, or intention. This, of course, would eliminate all versions of utilitarianism and consequentialism, but this result need not worry us too much. Nicolai Hartmann argues that, strictly speaking, utilitarianism and consequentialism are not ethical theories. More precisely, if an ethical theory is possibly only under the condition that there is an absolute or intrinsic good, then utilitarianism and consequentialism are not ethical theories because they deny the existence of such a good. Utility and good consequences inevitably deal with relative good. What is useful is useful for one purpose but not for another. Good consequences are good with regard to one expected outcome but not for another (Hartmann, 2002).

The main reason for the wide acceptance of utilitarianism and consequentialism is not in their inherent ethical merits. It is rather in their capturing what Max Weber so masterfully exposed in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*: the Calvinist view that redirects Christians from piety and compassion toward hard work and service that lead to tangible outcomes (Weber, 2010). Modern Western civilization is underwritten by the belief that a lifetime of labor and

service is proof of an individual's goodness and worth and, vice versa, all tendencies toward inaction, daydreaming, or sentimental attachments are seized upon as outward signs of some inner moral flaw. Utilitarianism and consequentialism are not ethical theories but objective standards for practicality and efficiency.

Love does not have much to do with measured practicality and efficiency; considered in those terms, love is a useless value. Yet, as Hartmann points out, it may be that precisely these useless values, and not practicality and efficiency that confer meaning to our lives (Hartmann, 2003). He furthermore insists that the central value of love inheres in its disposition, in its intention. By its nature, love is affirmation, good will, devotion, and constructive tendency, just as hatred is denial, overthrow, and annihilation. Love involves kindness and devotion, placed in the service of what we love. Understood in this way, love's ethical relevance becomes more apparent. Firstly, by loving something we display its value; what we love we value in a sense of treating it as something special, and in extreme cases as something sacred. Secondly, if loving itself is a genuine good, then its value is not instrumental and relative. The loving attitude is an unconditional and absolute good. An ethical theory that is based on motivations and intentions should place love at its very core. The reason why this does not happen in Kantianism is because it shifts from good will to duties, from benevolence to justice. (Although it would be ideal to bring them together, justice need not be loving and nor must love be just). Once developed, an ethics of aspiration will have love as its central and highest good.

Let us try to be more precise. Following Dietrich von Hilderbrand, we can divide various human motivations into *intentio benevolentiae* and *intentio unionis*: benevolent intentions and intentions striving toward unity (von Hilderbrand, 2009). These two kinds of intentions do not exclude each other, but they are separable. In some forms of love: self-love, brotherly love, love among friends, love of strangers, and love between parent and child, we can see that *intentio benevolentiae* is clearly of central significance. (Such benevolence may be directed toward the self-perfecting, or toward the service of others, but, although moving in opposite directions, these two can be complementary.) Of further importance is the realization that there are also forms of love – personal love, love of the world, and love of God – where *intentio unionis* is of more direct importance.

Are only forms of love based on benevolent intentions relevant for ethics, or could forms of love based on the intention of striving toward unity be of significance as well? That depends on our moral categories. Clearly, the indispensable moral concepts are those of good and evil but are they the only relevant ones?

In analogy with Kant's treatment of aesthetic phenomena, where he distinguishes between aesthetically beautiful and aesthetically sublime, we can introduce a distinction between what is morally good and what is morally sublime. In that case, the forms of love dealing with *intentio benevolentiae* would fall into the category of the morally good, while forms of love based on *intentio unionis* would belong to the category of the morally sublime. To see whether this suggestion is of any value, we should first clarify the category of the sublime.

"Sublime" refers to something great or superior. In such types of experience we feel overwhelmed by the greatness or superiority of what we observe. The purest forms of sublime can be recognized in the realms of religion and myth, but also in the realms of nature and art. We do not have a specific physical sense of the manifestations of the sublime. Rather, the sublime is something grasped by the soul. We even need to establish a certain distance from the sensually given to experience something as sublime. Moreover, we need a distance from our ego: the less this type of experience is about myself, the more easily I can experience the sublime (Hartmann,

2014).

Traditionally speaking, the concept of moral superiority is invoked in the contexts of extraordinary heroism (as presented in heroic epics), or of enormous suffering (as presented in great tragedies). We are more interested here in the possibility of some manifestations of love falling into the category of the morally sublime. I will leave it for another occasion to discuss the love of God, which shifts toward the religious realm, and will instead consider the cases of personal love and love of the world.

By personal love I mean an intense, prolonged, and unlimited love of one person for the unique personality of another. Unlike justice, which connects the surface aspect of one personality to the surface of another, and unlike brotherly love, which connects one's general humanity to the humanity of others, personal love unites the innermost depth of one human being with the innermost depth of another. Personal love is a complete giving of oneself to a relationship with another person: one soul surrenders to another and unites with it. Personal love is an uncalculated giving of oneself without yet losing oneself in this relationship. Hartmann believes that personal love is the greatest moral value and the ultimate source of life's meaning. In his words: personal love "gives an ultimate meaning to life; it is already fulfillment in germ, an uttermost value of selfhood, a bestowal of import upon human existence – useless, like every genuine self-subsistent value, but a splendor shed upon our path" (Hartmann, 2003, p. 381).

Another dimension of love of superior moral value – even more neglected by philosophers and Western civilization as a whole – is love of the world. For centuries we have been treating the world with neglect, even contempt. We behave as if the world exists to serve our purpose, as if it can only have an instrumental value. Love of the world implies a radically different attitude. As Albert Schweitzer argues, love should be understood and displayed as reverence for life – for all living beings, including animals and plants. Ethics would then consist in the affirmation of all life and our devotion to it. More precisely, ethics would consist in my experiencing "the compulsion to show to all will to live the same reverence as I do to my own. There we have given us that basic principle of the moral, which is a necessity of thought. It is good to maintain and encourage life; it is bad to destroy life or to obstruct it" (Schweitzer, 1987, pp. 137–138).

As Schweitzer shows, love in general means a refusal to control, manipulate, or exploit. However, love of the world means the acceptance and the affirmation of *all* reality, not just of all living beings; it means surrender that leads to a sense of unity with the world as a whole, to peace of mind and serenity. The greatest champion of the acceptance of the world and serenity is Lao-tse, who insists that the invisible flow of energy ("*tao*") is the root that gives birth to both the visible and the invisible aspects of the world, to the profane and the sacred. According to this Chinese sage, our task is to learn not to block that flow of energy but to put ourselves in harmony with it, to accept the world and to love it for what it is. Serenity within and peace with the rest of the world is the ultimate form of love and the final wisdom of life. They may be the highest accomplishments of which human beings are capable.

V

By its nature, love is never a mere sentimental kindness; nor is it about what is right and what is wrong. Understood in terms of moral sublimity, love takes us even further outside the usual ethical categories. Love is a metaphysical and religious force that leads us toward philosophical anthropology and comprehensive metaphysics and philosophy of religion. Better yet, if we want to avoid these abstract phrases, we can say that love understood in this way leads us toward a philosophy of humanity, a philosophy of what it means to be a human being, to live like a human

being, and affirm our human place and role in the world as a whole. Love is so crucial because it leads us back to recognize the cultivation of the soul as the centerpiece of our humanity. Love helps us recover what is best in us, the center of our humanity, and it then stimulates us to act from this very center. This acting is not labor, nor is it valuable because it leads to useful results and beneficial consequences. Love is a useless value that bestows meaning on life: the more capable we are of loving and surrendering ourselves, the more meaningful our lives becomes. This is why we should not say: “I think, therefore I am”, but: “I love, therefore I am”. And what I am as a loving being is a developed and mature human being, in the fullest sense of that phrase.

If these reflections are accurate, they suggest a different conception of philosophy as well. In the past, we have been too narrowly focused on theory and explanation as defining our philosophical practice. Although they are unquestionably important, they belong neither to the very core of our philosophizing, nor to the very core of our humanity, which Socrates so aptly captured in the words: “Care for your soul!”

The previous reflections indicate the primacy of the practical over the theoretical; not of practical reason over theoretical reason, as Kant would have it, but of the practical realm, in general, over the theoretical realm. Primarily, philosophy is a way of life. It is a way of life centered on the soul, around caring for the soul and developing our humanity – in its most diverse aspects and to its utmost potential. For the sake of our preservation and, even more, for the sake of our sanity, we need to find a way to overcome the modern fragmentation of personality and the depersonalization of the world. The body and the soul must reunite, and our attitude toward other human beings and the world as a whole must be opposite from our customary indifference. We have to learn how to love and how to make the pursuit of the art of loving the sovereign concern of our lives. This is not a moral law nor a categorical imperative, but an aspiration to the realization of which we should dedicate ourselves.

Accordingly, philosophy has to be practiced from inside-out, rather than from some imaginary value-neutral and cognitively detached point of view, that should then miraculously lead to our proper understanding of our place and role in reality. Philosophy should start with what is the most intimate to us, with good will. It should be built on what makes us alive, on what makes us *most* alive and *most* human, and that is love. In pursuit of love, in pursuit of benevolence and unity, we display our humanity and develop it toward the realization of our highest potential.

Philosophy began as a love of wisdom. In the course of its development, it has lost track of both love and wisdom. The time has come to understand philosophy in a new way – as the wisdom of love. The best wisdom we have been able to achieve so far is the understanding that love makes us as humane as we can be. Our ultimate aspiration in life must be to become not only thoughtful but also loving human beings.

Predrag Cicovacki was born in Belgrade, Serbia, where he also received his B.A. in Philosophy. After working with Prof. Lewis White Beck and defending his doctoral dissertation in Kant’s philosophy, from the University of Rochester (Rochester, New York, USA), since 1991 he has been teaching philosophy and peace studies at the College of the Holy Cross (Worcester, Massachusetts, USA). He is the author and/or editor of sixteen books. His current research is in the philosophy of love and nonviolence.

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