

There is no such thing as unconditional love. Love has, is, and will always succeed in remaining undeniably conditional for whoever seeks to provide its charm or be the wanting benefactor of its grasp.

Love, the greedy, contentious feeling that finds itself exacerbated by man and his pension for begotten fantasy, is no more unconditional than the resolve of a car seeking to drive without any gasoline in its tank to catalyze the process. Whether or not the vehicle's sole purpose in life is to drive or henceforth be driven; without the ignition to dispose of, it is no closer to driving than a bird without wings is to taking flight. It may "turn over" or "flutter" or appear as if ready to run and barrel down the road most efficiently, but as all who are privy know, the gasoline in its tank is intrinsic, as the bird's wings are fundamental.

Despite this fact, this fatal interpretation of love persists – perpetuated through the musings of popstars, poets, social media influencers and of the like. This exhausted thought that unconditional love – and therefore, love itself – knows no bounds, or simply has no end in sight and that it can endure any struggle or any barrier that meets its path, is not only a naive miscalculation, but an egotistical misstep that disregards everything history has to say on the matter.

If love were truly unconditional, it would be as irrefutable as the wind that touches the plains; indifferent and continuous from dawn till dusk. But love, by and which we are so tenderly drawn, maintains a perpetual ebb and flow that toils along while only allowing a handful of conscious input by the feeler or in this case, lover, at any moment they are stricken with the ability to assess.

This is because the definition by which we equate love is not love at all, but rather the initial spark which brought forth feelings of longing, lust, or desire that we now feel the need to act on. Our definition is a mere bastardization of what the true essence of love is. It leaves no room for the individuals to expressly openly and pontificate freely. No space to step outside the carefully constructed role they were designed to fit and hopefully still hold onto the individualistic qualities they felt made them – them. It leaves nothing at all! How we as a society define love is that of true and utter surrender on part of both of the individuals which, in no subtle delusion, spits in the face of what true love is or could be.

Not to be confused with the simple definition of a *relationship*, love is unquestionably rooted in the give and receive ideology. While there may be *qualities* of a greater sum that are of course, unconditional – or better put, undefinable between two people; love's overarching health must be tended to like that of a garden in order to steady the hope of rising up to gather more sunlight in the foreseeable, or any, future. It may be fertile at first, but that can be lost quickly.

As noted before, society tends to focus on the initial spark of love rather than the arduous process of maintaining it. And there are no doubt some relationships where this spark of seemingly unconditional love will appear intact, steadfast and fertile. The love of a mother to their child, for example, is something the gods bestowed upon this earth to remain tender in their mysterious ways. It is symbiotic and, in my opinion, the closest thing we see that could collectively be understood as unconditional love between two individuals.

But even this love which God bestowed upon women, delivered through the ever-enduring, but ever-rewarding task of forging a life inside their womb to, in nine months, bring it forth through curdling screams and agonizing contractions to foster a *hopefully* happy life in this archaic world... this love is still not unconditional. At the culmination of the birthing moment and the moments or days, months, or years that proceed to follow, it very well may appear to be... But with time – whether short or long, tall or wide, thick or thin – it will eventually find itself in a place of want and question. Judgement and distress. At the very least, it will demand to be loved in return.

So, to run with the fact that love (even a mother's) is indeed, not an infinite well that can never run dry or be impervious to the contamination of disillusionment even if its beginnings are 'magical' or 'novel'; we can understand that when we define love as *conditional*, we must seek to understand the *conditions* in which it can grow to reach its fully realized self. For only there does it allow for a depth far beyond the means of any simple placement of duty, or unconditional fallacy.

Most importantly, we must eliminate the misunderstanding on the definition of love and do our part to redefine it through work and growth.

Love, by how we experience it between two people, is not herculean in any sense of the word. Yes, it can grow and adapt and manage some of the weight brought on by life's changes and become *much stronger* than it started out... but it cannot weather these changes mythically or intuitively. Nor by design or cosmically bestowed measure. The dance that love – and keep in mind, this isn't just romantic love we are talking about – requires from the individuals cannot be learned by ear without any rehearsal or coordination on behalf of the people involved in the union. It is always unique to the two and continuously adjusting itself to the tempo of the song being played and the energy being felt.

Love is delicate, fine and pure. In this quick moving modern world, to thoroughly define it feels silly because the conclusion one always seems to reach is that it must have been granted by God or some divine, intrepid being evolutions ago and that it has never – and will never – require, or even seek, any input from the hedonistic persona that has sat inside man since the coliseum days and beyond. Whether the greatest minds of time – Cicero, Shakespeare, Cummings – have attempted to capture it with such wistful metaphors as any can draw up, with continued wonderment, it is no doubt that those who have experienced it in its rawest form have realized that words are futile devices unprepared for articulating the real, poetic concepts that love tends to create and employ.

Now, that isn't to say that love is dependent on the unions of parenthood, or friendship, or lovers to articulate its very nature. As we've already established that love is indefinable, it cannot be linked to simple mechanisms for defining "couples" or "groups" that people and societies tend to uphold. Love operates far beyond rudimentary measures, outside of man's grasp. That is why when a relationship ends, it may feel like the love has ended – but through honest examination we know it most assuredly has not. It has changed and adjusted, but it has not gone off and died outright. And while this feeling of continual remnants can be tantalizing to define this love as a

form of unconditionality in the sense that it continues on past the relationships boundaries that originally molded it. It is not unconditional. Following the demise of the relationship and the change in dynamic surrounding the love, there are many, if not, more conditions that must be met to even remotely humor a love that once was. It is nothing more than a simple remnant of the past being propped up by the nostalgic beings that we are. But doesn't that just go to show the trickiness of love?

Love is dependent on cohesion, reciprocity, and admiration. It is a conscious decision to commit oneself to the individual when needed or asked. A true, modern love requires from both parties continuous pragmatism, capitulation, and adhesion to the protocol established. Protocol is subject to change of course, and that is where the rubber meets the road on conditionship and flexibility. It's irrelevant if one is charming, handsome, well-endowed and so on, for without the continued reciprocation and updating on the charm that gave the love its righteous glimmer, it will not survive on novelty.

So, if we understand that love is *not* unconditional by any form and measurement, and we also understand the practice and effort it requires from and for the individuals to succeed in reaching a depth beyond measurement; it only goes to show that this is clearly a much better system for conducting something as wistful and undeniable as love, rather than relying on some hollow definition of unconditionality to thrive.

Humans, or rather, people as we now know and see them in this current world are virtually the same as their ancestors were dating all the way back some two hundred thousand years ago. Our outfits, technologies, and social commitments are, of course, much different than a nomadic dweller's, but our brains and bodies, by all scientific measurements on the subject, have not given rise to evolutionary advances that are worth noting on the genealogical scale. No adjustments in the knees or lower backs to provide more support for the upright stature. No changes in the retina to unveil the further colors the universe has been hiding from us. And most specifically, no neural injections of morality and ethical resolve that takes us far above the current scale that humans are diplomatically, socially, and morally weighed upon. None of these changes have been categorically noted in the past hundred thousand years, and most certainly not in the past thirty.

So, to say a human from the origination of the "modern man" up until the point that is now, is a selfish being that requires a thorough input of love in order to generate a righteous output – this would be exactly the point. We are evolutionary creatures, the same as the ones that occupy our history books from time immemorial and will continue to do so until time ceases. We are no different from the terrified soldiers on the Roman front, or too removed from the Achaemenids that dominated before, or without the same fervor for our hopes and dreams as a nineteenth century girl on the homefront of Prussia. And taking that understanding, we can articulate that you, me, homo-sapiens from their beginning of time and all the way over to the neolithic period where people began forging agriculture, are all on the same scale of abilities when it comes to processing information on an intra and interpersonal level. We are evolutionary creatures, yes, but evolution takes place at the pace of a man attempting to walk the known

universe one step at a time – slow and steady. Of course some progress can be made in due time, but that progress is made at a fraction of a decimal over a millenia.

With this final understanding, we can now relent to the fact that it isn't just love that is conditional; human beings require conditions to be met for virtually every single thing they choose to operate with. It is true – you and I are as conditional and selfish as they come. And the true beauty in that is, it's not a bad thing at all when it comes to love. The universe that we are mere products of has never and will never be interested in interpreting the morality of such a thing. It is interested in survival and safety and prosperity. We can see now that it will always be this way until the end of our lifetimes and at any point in the foreseeable or unforeseeable future. And that is the wonderfulness of conditionality in our relationships. Its presence and guidance allows love to thrive rather than wither under some sort of proto idealism. The theory that unconditional love is somehow superior to this, takes an unjustified shot at the idea of what true human nature is. We are not omniscient beings, nor infallible souls. We are not infinite in our wisdom to provide limitless grace or patience and we are most definitely not willing to bend our joints to the point of fracture. We are as beautifully flawed as they come. We are all in search of connection, not through denial of personal interest, but rather a mutual reciprocation from the chosen counterpart. Therefore, love is not in any such way made lesser by the terms of conditionality. It is made richer, more meaningful, and more open to new understanding.

Keep in mind that when we state that love is conditional, this is by no means a reduction of love to a mere transaction of feelings. Rather, affirming its conditionality honors the beauty that has been bestowed upon it while still adhering to its most fragile qualities. A love that demands nothing in return is not love. It is complacency. But when love asks for respect and support or when it harkens so deeply for reciprocity; it is revitalized going forward. That's because the conditions set upon love create the boundaries which can reveal its most delicate form. They are not chains, but a map that leads toward a person's inner workings. Without these hints; love is stuck in a sea of uncertainty, with no other choice but to surrender to societal whims.

To love conditionally is to love honestly. It is to recognize that love cannot be sustained through blind devotion or self-sacrifice, but through a steady negotiation of needs, boundaries, and expectations. An ongoing conversation that listens and replies. And this, ultimately, is what gives love its power, not some sort of prepackaged endurance. The conditions that define love are as far from weakness as one could be. And to accept this truth is not to diminish love's beauty, but to truly uphold it.