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Love

Melvyn Bragg : Hello, in Plato's *Symposium*, Aristophenes tells a story about love. He says that once near the beginning of time, there were three types of human, one male, one female, and one that was part man and part woman, each human type had four hands and four feet and one head, with two faces, and what they lacked in beauty, they made up for in power and bravery, they even dared to attack the gods. Zeus, as usual lost his patience, and resolved to split these creatures in half to diminish their strength and increase their numbers, his plan was that there would be more people to offer sacrifices, but they'd be too weak to challenge the gods. However, with the split, he inadvertently created us, lonely creatures, forever searching for our other halves. Aristophenes explained to Socrates, "Human nature was originally was originally one and we were a whole, and the desire and pursuit of the whole is what we call love". That's one version of love, it still seems to have strange echoes in the culture of today, but how has the Western understanding of the philosophy of love developed since Plato, and has it always been about finding our other half?

With me to discuss love, is the philosopher, professor Roger Scruton, author or many books, including "Sexual Desire", also with me is Angie Hobbs, lecturer in philosophy at Warwick University, and author of Plato and the hero, and Thomas Docherty, professor of English at the University of Kent.

Angie Hobbs, the type of love I briefly described that Aristophenes described is only one possible answer to Plato's question. Socrates had another answer, could you tell us about that?

Angie Hobbs : Yes. Socrates agrees with Aristophenes, that love originates in human imperfection and lack and need, but he claims that what we lack and need is not our other half, but the beautiful and good. He claims that love, generally, is a desire for...to possess the good forever, but ...and that of course implies that love also desires immortality. Now as humans, personal immortality is not available to us, all we can do is to produce creations that will live on after us, and the means by which we achieve the production of these creations is through the inspiration of a beautiful beloved, and he goes on to outline three main types of creation which are open to humans.

The first - and in Socrates's eyes - the least important is biological offspring. Next come heroic deeds, and lasting fame, and finally is the production of works of science and education and legislation and art and philosophy, and the crucial point there, is that though these creations *can* in some instances be motivated by love of a particular individual, Socrates thinks that the greatest creations will be produced when our erotic energies are diverted away from particular human beings, and onto ever more abstract beautiful objects, culminating in the vision of the beautiful itself, the form of beauty.

Melvyn Bragg : So the erotic is a sort of engine which raises a ladder out of which we can climb to higher things?

Angie Hobbs : Precisely, Socrates describes this ascent away from the particular individual towards the form of beauty as precisely a ladder of love .

Melvyn Bragg : So love is a benevolent driving force?

Angie Hobbs : It is, yes.

Melvyn Bragg : Or it can be?

Angie Hobbs : It can be. It can be...

Melvyn Bragg : We'll come back to the other side later in the programme.

Angie Hobbs : ..of course, of course, yes.

Melvyn Bragg : Roger Scruton, would you agree with...could you comment on that, develop that?

Roger Scruton : Well of course that's an excellent of what Socrates says, and it makes clear to my view, what's wrong with it, because if you...if the whole culmination and fruition of love ...it consists of this emancipation from the particular, and the wedding...and becoming wedded to the universal, then the individual object of love falls away as irrelevant, and yet that's what love is, love is love for an individual. So Socrates has given you a theory of love and why it is a great and good thing, which makes it something not love at all, but a kind of intellectual contemplation of an an abstract idea.

Melvyn Bragg : So what was Socrates...what was Socrates basing his idea of love on? What sort of observations, what sort of deductions did he use...

Roger Scruton : Well I think....

Melvyn Bragg : ...to draw him to the notion of love, which led him to these..these ideas which although you've contra...you've *challenged* them, have been pervasive, and still are pervasive for two and a half thousand years.

Roger Scruton : I think what is persuasive and well...*moving* about about Socrates' portrait of love is not what it ends up as - you know this contemplation of the abstract idea of beauty, but what it begins from. It begins from this erotic attachment to the pure incarnate individual, and the trouble that that causes to us.

Socrates is aware of the trouble, but partly because you know, in the Greek world in which he belonged, often this attachment was homosexual, and there were all kinds of interdictions as to how it could be fulfilled and how it shouldn't be fulfilled and so on. And he came up with the idea that of course, to give way to this, as a...in a... as a merely carnal thing, would be to demean yourself as a rational being, to become enslaved to the particular, enslaved to the flesh, and our duty as a free rational beings is somehow to transcend that attachment to the incarnate human being and rise up to something more spiritual, and that's why he gave this account of the ladder I suppose.

Melvyn Bragg : If I can come to Thomas Docherty, maybe this isn't the beginning of, perhaps they were precursors of Plato here, but at time when it is stated that eros is to do sex - let's use that as a shorthand for eros, although it doesn't adequate...never mind - is what we have in common with the animal kingdom, and therefore it is a lower thing.

Now that seems to me to be worth commenting on and developing and perhaps challenging. What would you like to say about it Thomas Docherty?

Thomas Docherty : In relation to the kind of literary manifestations of all of this. I mean literature is precisely what deals with this contest as it were, between the demands to attachment to particularity on the one hand and the demand for a kind of rational social commitment, which is literature's version as it were of universal on the other, and the way in which we see that treated I think in literature is partly to do with what we might think of as - you described it Melvyn, as a kind of animal drive, I prefer to think of it as just the kind of physicality love. Love as a rather material and eventually primarily sexual activity, and in the history of literature - the primacy of that sexual commitment is not always there. Literature primarily really from about the 18th century onwards is trying desperately to negotiate a relation between the demands of "Sense and Sensibility" as Austen will exclusively call it, the demands of a reasoned love, loving someone for particular reasons, and on the other hand, a love a love with is ostensibly - not quite irrational, but not ....a love that cannot be accounted for in reasoned terms, so that we have a love that eventually becomes something rather immaterial, and the way in which we see that in literature is in terms of a kind of contest between - if you like - the demands of sex on the one hand and the demands of the social on the other.

Melvyn Bragg : But, just to stick with the Greeks for a moment....

Thomas Docherty : Sure.

Melvyn Bragg : ...that's very clear, very clear, we'll stick with ....this idea of sex being a lower thing....

Thomas Docherty : Yep.

Melvyn Bragg : ...is establishing a hierarchy which seems to me, very interesting, maybe it's a real hierarchy. But why should it be the lower thing? And he doesn't..as far as my reading of it, Plato doesn't say, it's sort of physical, he says it's because it's animal.

Thomas Docherty : Yep.

Melvyn Bragg : Because it makes us like animals, and we don't want to be like animals, we have something else, we have something of the divine about us, so let's get away from that, that is a lower thing which you must escape. I want to sort of challenge that and have your opinions on that, d'you want to comment or Angie, which of you?

Thomas Docherty : You mean to challenge the idea of sex being....

Melvyn Bragg : That it is lower, it is necessarily lower. Do we still accept that it is necessarily lower?

Thomas Docherty : I think interestingly, I think interestingly what has happened in the 20th century, certainly in the literary manifestations of this in the 20th century is that sex became the *only* way, in which we began to think of love, and now as we go into a new century, that is again being challenged, and that we're going back if you like to the version of Plato that you're offering, where you have a sense that there is a kind of sexual element in love, but it's not the only element in love. I mean the great move through the 20th century is that love becomes a question of technique , it becomes techny, not you know - it becomes quite simply how good you are at this other activity called sex. But we're now beginning I think to rethink this in terms of sex being an *other* activity.

Melvyn Bragg : Can...? Sorry, I'll come across to you in a second Roger Scruton. Can you...we talk about Plato's second broad definition of love which is called *philia,* can you describe that, before we move on?

Angie Hobbs : Yes, philia is familial love, or friendship love, and Plato never comes up with a definition of it, in the way that he comes up with some definitions of *eros*, erotic love. He *does* discuss it in a wonderful dialogue called the Lycis, and it's never quite clear whether good people are friendly with other good people because of their goodness, or because they lack something, or need something.
It seems to me that in the Lycis, Plato may be exploring if not challenging the notion that all human love stems from lack and need, because the models of friendship that he critiques in the Lycis all fall down because they all seem to stem from the idea that friendship...friends must lack/need something in their friend, and if somebody is *perfectly good*, that they won't need friends , they won't need that kind of love.
On my reading, Plato might be raising questions, and saying, "Well maybe not all forms of human love need to stem from lack, although when he discusses eros, he *does* seem to accept the model of love based on lack.

Melvyn Bragg : Roger Scruton I saw you wanted to comment on what Thomas Docherty said, but I'd also like you to comment - before we move away from the Greeks - on the presence of homosexuality implicit in a lot of what is said in Plato's dialogue here, and how that has affected philosophy of love since then.

Roger Scruton : Well that's a deep question which I think I'm not an expert on at all. Plato as everybody knows, belonged to a homosexual culture, but it's quite clear that he himself was in retreat from it, that's to say, you know the idea of the expression of this in the physical act of love was in some way repugnant to him, and that I think motivated his desire to produce a theory of the erotic which put the concept of transcendence at the heart of it, and that really the erotic, because he recognised erotic love as the intense powerful thing that it is, he recognised it must have a divine origin, but if it was divine it must have also the intention - the hidden intention - of rising ..raising us above the purely animal level.
What I want...I mean this idea you mentioned earlier of the...you know that the sexual act is animal, and therefore lower than the rational part of the soul - I think that we ought to take that very seriously, and it...not just because of it's historical importance, but because it does identify an anxiety that we all of us have, that we all of us make the distinction, even people who've survived, like us, into this post-modern valueless age. We all make the distinction between the proper use and the improper use of our sexuality, and Plato was perhaps the first person really to take

that seriously as the prime psychic fact about sex, that there is a proper and improper us, and that the improper use is precisely the that use that puts before our mind the vision of ourselves as animals, as nothing more than animals, and in particular promiscuous sex is the use of your body as a pure object of exchange which can be, you know given to anybody, used by anybody, and the use of others in a similar way, that's a thing that Plato feared and recognised as a serious possibility.

And it's a thing that people nowadays perhaps don't fear until it's too late, but nevertheless everybody recognises that's it's in their interest in the end, to unite their sexual nature with their capacity to love, and the capacity to love is a purely..is a thing which we have as rational beings, and not as animals.

Melvyn Bragg : Thomas Docherty?

Thomas Docherty : This..I mean this is..this is..close to another rather important question, which is love is a kind of social mechanism, love is something that helps us to organise ourselves in social ways. And the term...it has to be understood there's a semantic problem here. You know the term love - if I say "I love you" these days, I suppose we all broadly know, roughly what it means.

However, somebody says "I love you" in one of Shakespeare's history plays, what it means there, is not "I have an erotic desire for you" , " I want to go and sleep with you", "I want to have promiscuous sex with you" or anything like that. It means rather "I'm on your side". "I'm pledging an allegiance with you", "I'm affiliated with you". "I am of the same community as you". And that notion of love is something which I think is very, very important, that it has to...

Melvyn Bragg : But is there...has the word love....? Not...I was going to come to that...

Thomas Docherty : Please....

Melvyn Bragg : ..please develop this, because I just want to...has it become...what value does it now have? You now when you say "I love someone" to someone who knows you love them, that has a specific, particular, local and one hopes, proper value.

But the word's thrown around all over the place now, people go "I love you" all the blummin' place, it's just....it never used to happen in my childhood I can tell you! (laughter) But it does, and it just seems..what's left of it?

Thomas Docherty : Well, the same word can be used in different contexts in different ways, I mean it's the way in which you describe, it's a rather loose use these days, it is of course a social phenomenon, that does not mean that the sentiment of love, as it may have existed prior to these days, has somehow evaporated or disappeared. It means that we simply have different ways of articulating those kinds of desires, those kinds of questions, now that's all. It's a linguistic thing.

Roger Scruton : I agree. I mean it's not really...this hasn't happened recently Melvyn, after all even when we were young, the ordinary cockney approach between man and woman was to call the woman "darling", you know or "luv", you know, and this promiscuous use of a holy word, is an old English habit. Now perhaps, people use the word, the F-word, sorry, I mean the BBC wouldn't allow me to pronounce, with the same promiscuity that they used to use the L-word , and it's still, you know, one shouldn't say that's because we take it...make it any more cheap.

Melvyn Bragg : Can we move to the ...to what could be called "the dangers of love"? Angie would you like to kick off with that? What dangers were spotted as it were originally, if we can take Plato's original, and how have they developed in the philosophy and literature of love?

Angie Hobbs : Yes, well Socrates makes it quite clear in his speech in the Symposium that if you stay at the level of erotic attachment to a particular individual, you are living a very risky life, you risk you lover dying, you risk your lover withdrawing his or her love, you risk what Socrates calls the potential for enslavement in love. So he sees this particular erotic attachment to one individual as no life for a free human being, and he believes that his ladder of

love, offers us a very comforting picture in which we can ascend to a place where we are free from such shackling desires and demands.

And where...and from which we can view the individual not as a unique particular, who can have a particular hold over us, but simply as an instantiation to a greater or lesser extent of the form of beauty itself. So particular's lose their unique particularity, they become seen simply as earthly copies of the divine form of beauty, and the other divine forms, and they become simply tokens of a universal type, and hence replaceable, and Socrates thinks this a very liberating form of the rechanneling of desire. Now whether we would agree with Socrates, is another matter, we might well find such an image rather disturbing, and chilling.

Melvyn Bragg : Roger Scruton?

Roger Scruton : Well I was going to say that it's fine for Socrates to say that you can free yourself from the dangers of love by ascending to this other place, where you...to have a perspective on the idea of beauty itself, but suppose there is no such other place? You know! Which it does seem fairly likely

What...we still have the problem, in the here and now, of distinguishing between a correct or right attachment and a wrong one, and I would have thought, that's more the task of literature down the centuries. You know take a novel like "Manonlisko" (????).

You know , there's a beautiful portrait of somebody who's led astray by his erotic attachment to Manon, her life ruined and shattered but by a real love, and you know surely, there are lessons to learn here, we want to make a distinction between the successful pursuit of love, which actually brings happiness and fulfilment, and the unsuccessful, which produces that kind of chaos.

Melvyn Bragg : Thomas Docherty, is it about the Renaissance and afterwards, that it becomes prevalent for several hundred years that individual erotic love, love of sentiment is dangerous and is...can be poisonous and can ruin lives, and can lead to all sorts of...it becomes a great part of…. is it reflecting hype d'you think or is it, or is it instructing life in that sense?

Thomas Docherty : I think in that early modern period certainly what we're seeing is that the love that we've just been talking about is always a question of risk. It's a question - especially with the emergence...

Melvyn Bragg : Why has it become a question of risk and so prevalent, can you...?

Thomas Docherty : Partly...part of that's to do with political and cultural situations in which we think of - certainly in a capitalist and post capitalist age - we think of our activities in broadly economic terms, so that for instance, even the making of the statement "I love you" to another individual is something that is - if you like a kind of investment. When you say "I love you" to another individual, what you're looking for is an investment that's going to yield a return. You do not want the person...typically you do not want the person to reply to you "Well frankly I can't stand your guts" . I mean what you're looking for in reply is "I love you too, *but more*", so it's as it were a kind of banking investment, almost, and what you're seeing, I mean you see that explicitly in the opening scene of King Lear, if you remember..

Melvyn Bragg : Yeah, I do know yeah.

Roger Scruton : But that was King Lear's mistake! To see love in that way wasn't it?

Thomas Docherty : But it's not so much...it's not Lear's (indistinct) that I am interested in here, what I'm interested in is, the predicament in which a potential over is put. At the beginning of that play, the conventional view is that everybody is there...everybody is at the court in order to see King Lear splitting up the kingdom, but why is he splitting up the kingdom? he's splitting up the kingdom because he's got two daughters who are married and one daughter who is about to be married. One daughter who he clearly wants to marry off to the Duke of Bergundy, who is waiting in the wings. At that moment he puts Cordelia into a impossible position, because he says to Cordelia "tell

me how much you love me" and Cordelia is profoundly aware of the fact that Bergundy is in the wings and she's about to be married off to him. How can she swear huge love to her father, when she's about to be..

Melvyn Bragg : How could she say "I love you all"?

Thomas Docherty : Absolutely. Absolutely. She's put in a predicament where she's having to as it were, "limit her investment" - so to speak or to control or regulate her investment. And that's where the element of risk comes in, and what we have in the modern period I think is a sense of love as something so absolute we will pay homage to the absoluteness of it, by being willing to risk everything for it.

Melvyn Bragg : Is it....that's...I think...I was delighted you came onto that, because is Cordelia's management of her divided love the sort of sense and sensibility that she takes on, both in a way. Is....Can that be contrasted with Desdemona's passion of throwing herself at -pure sentiment - a man who she's warned against and who will drive her to destruction and does destroy her.
Can we see those two as the pillars of the way that the ideas of love moved into the more modern world through literature? Roger Scruton?

Roger Scruton : Difficult question. I would say that there's an enormous difference between Desdemona's case and Cordelia's..

Melvyn Bragg : That's the interesting thing though.

Roger Scruton : ..well, yes, Cordelia is - as Thomas was saying - I mean in a position where the language of investment makes sense, because after all she's having to balance familial love, love for a father, against married love and the erotic basis which that implies.
And of course that's not a calculation that anybody can seriously make, certainly not when challenged in this way.

Whereas Desdemona is her love is through and through erotic, and the whole purpose of the play is to show that a love can be both erotic and wholly chaste and yet Othello -precisely because the love is erotic is subject to this temptation, the terrible temptation that we were obliquely referring to before of seeing the animal part of it as predominant, and therefore being at every moment being open to the possibility being open to the possibility of sexual jealousy.

Melvyn Bragg : But fulfilling the very ancient idea - the erotic idea - eroticism - erotic love inevitably leads to jealousy and revenge.

Roger Scruton : It doesn't *inevitably* lead to that, because...

Melvyn Bragg : It can inevitably..it can...I withdraw "inevitably"! (chuckles) (laughter)

Roger Scruton : ...and Othello makes a mistake just in the way that Lear makes a mistake, by putting the emphasis on the wrong aspect of love.

Melvyn Bragg : Angie Hobbs?

Angie Hobbs : Yes it's just occurred to me that I think it's important to stress that in Plato's dialogue the Symposium, Socrates is *not* given the last word, that this pure notion of love for the from of beauty is *not* the culmination of the Symposium. The culmination is the explosive entry into the dialogue of a very charismatic and beautiful individual called Alsibiades, who was statesman cum politician and he refuses to give a theoretical account of what erotic love is. He gives a personal a passionate and very moving account of his own unconsummated love for Socrates, and in this speech, I think Plato very delicately balances both the attractions and beauties and allure of this kind of personal love, but also the dangers, because not only did Alsibiades never attain Socrates, and has the pain of loss of his hopes, but also his unrequited love has stirred up in Alsibiades great passions and jealousy and anger, and brought out a lot of the more dangerous aspects of his nature, and Plato ends the dialogue with I think some kind of balance.

I think Plato would have us choose the speech of Socrates but he's very fair-minded, he gives us all the strengths and weaknesses of the other side too.

Melvyn Bragg : Can we move on to the philosopher Kant, Roger Scruton? And what did he contribute to this debate about love?

Roger Scruton : Well, Kant was typical of the whole tradition of Western philosophy in that he didn't really have much experience of this aspect of human life! (small giggles)
No there were a few exceptions...

Melvyn Bragg : But the there are a great number of chaste philosophers, aren't there?

Roger Scruton : Yeah, there are (small laughs) and Kant was *chaste* in both senses (laughter), three women who wanted to marry him...

Melvyn Bragg : Pursued him?

Roger Scruton : ...yes he couldn't bring himself to go ahead with it. He ... Kant is famous for having produced an ethical theory which is, as it were, adapted to the condition of enlightenment man, it's an ethical theory which makes no mention of God, but which nevertheless captures the absolute force of morality as all of us experience it, and in particular he takes the view that the categorical imperative as he describes it tells us to treat human beings and ourselves among them as ends in themselves and never as means only.

Melvyn Bragg : Means to our own ends?

Roger Scruton : ...yes and he does think there is contained in that idea the basis for a sexual morality, and comes...he returns to this topic several times in his lectures on ethics and elsewhere, but always with a slightly bleak vision. He describes marriage for example as a contract for the mutual use of the sexual organs (Angie giggles), which is sort of very unappealing (giggles increase) conception of what actually induces people to tie themselves forever to each other!
You would think that surely, love is something more than that!? And of course, precisely because he's..his ethical theory forces him to describe marriage in that way, you can see that his ethical theory is incomplete..... the thing that's been left out of it *is* this thing called love, which is not just a matter of treating others as ends and not as means only, it's a matter of tying yourself to them completely, in what Hagel called "a substantial tie".

Melvyn Bragg : Can I turn to Thomas Docherty? Thomas you raised earlier "Sense and Sensibility" Jane Austen's book, the ideas expressed about Kant by Roger, they apply there don't they, especially the notion of marriage? Is that...am I right?

Thomas Docherty : I think so, to a large extent that's true, and the account that Roger gives, I think is broadly accurate and is reflected in the literature, but again what you're seeing there is a kind of contest between a kind of love that can be rationally described in the rather bleak terms that Roger's given us in those Kantian...the passage from Kant. You've got a love there that can be described in rational terms. What Austen's interested in is whether it's possible to articulate or enact a love that is equally reasonable but cannot be accounted for in such schematic abstract terms...

Roger Scruton : Absolutely.

Thomas Docherty : ..and that's what you're seeing through the six major novels. It's also what you see on both sides of Jane Austen, both prior to and after Jane Austen, but Jane Austen becomes a kind of key figure, because she schematises it herself in "Sense and Sensibility" and often times there is a rush to take a view that "Sense and Sensibility" as a novel is indeed a very schematic novel with one character representing sense, one character representing sensibility. Eleanor is full of reason, Marianne is full of wild passion, but in fact the novel complicates that as any worthwhile novel would. In order to demonstrate not just that you..you have a simple opposition here,

but that the very grounds on which you would try to regulate these terms between reasoned love and supposedly none-rational or extra-rational love, those terms themselves are part of the problem.

Melvyn Bragg : But the resolution it seems to me, if anybody's going to correct me, you three are, is in marriage, that's where Jane....sense will take us only so far, and can be monstrous, sensibility can only take us only so far and be monstrous. In marriage these things can be resolved, and you find that very admirable in philosophy and a philosopher himself Hagel, don't you Roger?

Roger Scruton : Yes, I think Hagel is a sort of unique in philosophers, in that he actually *was* married! (small giggles)

Melvyn Bragg : Twenty happy years!

Roger Scruton : yes...he did however produce an illegitimate child beforehand..

Angie Hobbs : Aristotle.

Roger Scruton : ..yes Aristotle was married, but we don't know about whether he was happily married or not.

Melvyn Bragg : We don't know that about many people! (laughter)

Roger Scruton : ...but ...yes, what Hagel says...well implies is very close actually to the underlying meaning, as I read of the Jane Austen novels that the erotic does have its roots in animal instincts, and nobody can deny that, but it is also intrinsically moralised as it were, but us. We're always making this distinction between the right and wrong employment of it, and this creates a huge tension in us which demands resolution, and this resolution can only occur by transition to a higher stage, to another stage of being, where your union with the other person is such as to cancel all these tensions, finally there is complete trust, which as to were unites you as a composite corporate entity and you face destiny together, and that I think is a beautiful idea.

Melvyn Bragg : Angie Hobbs, how d'you see...d'you see this....? Do you want to comment on this off your own bat, but could ask you, d'you see this as any kind of side step from, or development from what's in the ...in the Symposium?

Angie Hobbs : Well d'you mind if I....?

Melvyn Bragg : No, please.

Angie Hobbs : I'm...what I..

Melvyn Bragg : Be my guest.

Angie Hobbs : What I am thinking about at the moment are Chekov's plays in which there seems to me to be a distinction men and women look at marriage and the sense in which it might be a salvation. For the males marriage seems to be some kind of salvation from moral taupe and alcoholism and endless card games . For the women marriage might be not so much a moral salvation, but a salvation from the sort of domestic ennui of their daily lives, caring for the parents and so on. So, I think it might be important to make a gender difference here in the ways in which marriage in philosophy and literature has been perceived to be some kind of salvation or cure.

Melvyn Bragg : Thomas Docherty?

Thomas Docherty : I mean literature famously is the site in which that regularity of marriage was seen precisely as a kind of regularising thing, and *only* as a regularising thing. In Jane Austen's case, you're seeing exactly the notion of love as something that be economised and something that can be seen as a social phenomenon and *only* as a social

phenomenon. In a certain sense marriage has got nothing to do with it in literature. There's a peculiar sense in which literature kind of explores love and marriage as part of the social stuff.

Melvyn Bragg : Is there a sense Angie Hobbs, in which Freud recategorised love at the start of the last century or the end of...inside the last century?

Angie Hobbs : Oh yes, for Freud all forms of love, including the affections you feel for your family and friends have their origins in various forms of infantile sexuality. For Freud...

Melvyn Bragg : His desire and pursuit of the whole was the desire of the infant to repossess the mother through the breast wasn't it?

Angie Hobbs : Yes, yes, certainly in the early Freud, in the later Freud he also brings infant narcissism into the picture, the infant is going to have sexual urges either towards one of the parents, particularly the mother's breast, or in the later Freud, towards the infant's own self, the infants own ego.

Now some of these infantile sexual urges are inhibited by our culture, and these aim inhibited sexual urges Freud argues, are later transformed by a process he never makes entirely clear into the affectionate component of all our adult loves. So all aspects of our adult loves, not just the explicitly sexual ones, but the affectionate aspect too, have their roots in these infantile sexual longings, some of which have been repressed and inhibited.

Melvyn Bragg : D'you think that this was recategorisation which was something...is this recategorisation something you welcome Roger Scruton?

Roger Scruton : I neither welcome it nor believe in it. I think the whole thing is a load of self serving myth, in the mind of perverted peadophile.

Melvyn Bragg : This is Freud you're talking about? Just as well he's dead, I think!!!! (laughter)

Roger Scruton : I really think it is complete nonsense, there is no empirical evidence for...it's all established by consulting one play of Sophocles, you know...it's a wonderful piece of literary criticism that led to this notion of the Oedipus complex, and he was a failed literary critic or actually as Leslie Chamberlain says in her book, a recent book on him, "he's a failed artist".

But the scientific basis for this is zero , and also I think it's led to a complete corruption in people's attitude to children. This underlies people's sense that really sexuality is always there, and always ready to be exploited, and of course there is a whole couche of human society for whom that is a green light.

Melvyn Bragg : So you think this has been...

Roger Scruton : I've ridded myself of that....if I notice anything else...

Melvyn Bragg : I'm glad you go that out, d'you know.....you shouldn't sit on the fence so muc (laughter) But let's come back to this, 'cos we haven't got too much time, I want to get this straight. You think this recategorisation was a perversion of a development of an idea of love, which has sort of taken us away from what should...what was a better aim?

Roger Scruton : Yes, I think that Freud starts from the wrong conception of sexuality, he shares with Plato this view of the sexual act as somehow demeaning, animal, and so on, it's a hydraulic process for him, a desire which just gets dammed up and inhibited and then can release itself through erogenous zones and all that stuff. Starting from that position he naturally has a real problem as to how on Earth this can play a part in human life, especially in adult human life, and to try and reconcile himself to a description that he himself has given of it, he says "well it's because it's always been there", you know it has been integrated into our lives since childhood. Whereas in fact we know that it erupts into our life age 14, perhaps it's 12 these days. But anyway, that the eruption is a real psychic trauma, and

that is what we have to deal with and Freud's theory is an attempt to say that there is actually nothing to deal with because it's already been dealt with.

Melvyn Bragg : Angie Hobbs, I would guess you'd disagree with that?

Angie Hobbs : Well, I'm not sure I agree that Freud thought that all forms of sexual activity were ...were to be despised. I mean he does say that he thinks that in a mutually loving context, that sexual pleasure can provide humans with our most intense satisfaction and fulfilment, and it's the nearest we can get to returning to that original state of bliss, from which we were dragged away during childhood. However it's also true that he does emphasise some of the negative dangers of erotic attachment to -particularly if your love object doesn't reciprocate. And he does also say that he does think that some forms of aim inhibition are a good thing, because given that aim inhibition of early sexuality leads to the development of the feelings of affection later on, he thinks these feelings of affection are much more durable than feelings of erotic passion, and are hence much safer bonds with which to bind society together, and this is one of his main themes, and one of his last works on civilisation.

Melvyn Bragg : Can I move from Freud to DH Lawrence we bring literary parallels in again Thomas Docherty, what did he take, or add to this development...discussion..discourse on the philosophy of love?

Thomas Docherty : I think he's broadly consistent with Freud in the sense that despite what he himself would say about psychoanalysis, he's broadly consistent with Freud in the sense that for him love becomes primarily a question of sex, and what I was earlier referring to as love as technique, so what becomes interesting in DH Lawrence is not just the regulation of passions, but the physical manifestation of those passions, the acknowledgement that love must be physical, and eventually that becomes part of a general tendency I think within 20th century literature, that love is kind of elided, love becomes something that gets obscured under a question of sex, and how we organise ourselves in terms of sexuality, and in terms of something that we call desire, and desire of course, is something which after Freud we can account for almost in quantifiable terms. So that sex becomes again a kind of primary locus for our social activities, and DH Lawrence even explored that the whole time, but Lawrence has a particular problem in the sense that what Lawrence wants to do is to establish the idea that there's a kind of polarity between the sexes, that he wants to recognise...he wants us to have a love that's organised around a notion of a kind radical otherness, so that the female is always radically other to the male, the male's always radically other to the female. Whenever he tries to articulate that however, it become something where the sex...because of the primacy of the physical contact, it becomes something where the male almost colonises the female body. , you see that most explicitly of course in "Lady Chatterley's..."

Melvyn Bragg : Roger Scruton?

Roger Scruton : Yeah I think another way of putting that, is to say that for...that in Lawrence the sexual act, is essentially nuptial, and what he's exploring is the nuptiality of our relations with each other, that's to say that marriage...even in Lawrence, marriage, okay not the..perhaps in it's institutional form, but something like Jane Austen's vision of marriage as the culmination and the end point of this is still active in animating his language and the way in which he describes the sexual act.

Melvyn Bragg : I mean in a sense, do most - not by a long way - the best book - but the most important book on this theme that Lawrence wrote "Lady Chatterly" starts with the end of marriage..

Roger Scruton : Yes. (Angie assents)

Melvyn Bragg : ..instead of ending with the beginning of marriage, which most books until...sorry Thomas Docherty you wanted to come in.

Thomas Docherty : Yeah I was going to say that in Lawrence there's a further complication to the whole thing in that even if such a sexual union of polarities is ostensibly achieved it's never get quite enough, that Lawrence famously at the end of "Women in Love" we have an erotic relation, and heterosexual erotic relation which is somehow not enough for the male character...

Melvyn Bragg : He still needs..

Thomas Docherty : He still needs a friend...

Melvyn Bragg : Birkin still needs a friend..

Thomas Docherty : And it's that question of love and friendship, eros and philia again..

Melvyn Bragg : Eros..we're back...

Thomas Docherty : ..which comes back.

Melvyn Bragg : Gosh we've effortlessly come full circle..we're near the end of the programme, we didn't even organise it!! (laughter) Sorry..post scripts from Roger Scruton.

Roger Scruton : Oh there is just one aspect that we have not touched on, which is the idealisation of erotic love in medieval literature and Wagner, where non-consummation in the physical sense, is actually part of the point of it...

Melvyn Bragg : The striving?

Roger Scruton : The striving which actually finds fulfilment in the exchange of looks, just sitting and looking.....that is the real ecstasy for Tristam and Gizelda (sp?) for example.

Melvyn Bragg : We'll have to end there, thank you very much Roger Scruton, Thomas Docherty and Angie Hobbs and thank you very much for listening.