



## Love and Hate as soul phenomena

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Rudolf Steiner identified Love and Hate as a fundamental polarity in the human psyche or soul. Hate, though rejected (hated) by many, continues to show itself in the dynamics of self and society. Love has many forms, ranging from infatuation to the source of all creation. This article begins to unravel these concepts in Steiner's philosophy and as useful tools to understand human beings.

Why does the philosopher Rudolf Steiner (1910/1999, p. 80) say that 'true soul experiences and activities can be summed up by what we call the inner experiences of Love and Hate'? Why should these activities take place in the hallowed precincts of the soul, considered in the mainstream to be full of Love and devoid of Hate? (Further background in Tresemer, 2015.) Why does he state that every sensation that we have – every incoming information from our senses – is met at the border of our soul with Love or Hate?

I aim to show in this investigation how Steiner's use of these terms differs from common usage, and helps us understand better how the soul functions in human beings. I aim to befriend you with Love and Hate, active in the human soul.

### Love and Hate in our times

Love is ubiquitous in our culture, used in song and story, blaring out to everyone in public advertisements and whispered in private bedrooms. Love in all its ambiguity and range of expression includes the goal of the adolescent: 'Love makes the world go round'. Love, in Norman O. Brown's (1990) terms, is polymorphous, poly-perverse, driving all behaviour, everywhere yet nowhere.

Hate is ubiquitous also. The psychologist Aaron Beck (2000), sometimes named as the founder of cognitive psychotherapy, wrote about how Hate imprisons everyone in patterns of violence and anger. Hate is not only expressed in temper tantrums of children: 'I hate you!' Hate is shouted out loudly on some street somewhere in the world every minute of every day. As the new commons, social media have become vehicles for waves of Hate, Twitter trolls being only the most extreme.

At the October 2015 Parliament of the World's Religions (2015) conference, more than two dozen lectures and panel discussions addressed 'hate', including panels chaired by Karen Armstrong (cf. Armstrong, 2015). Hate lurks among us and seems to be increasing

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on the world stage. Though Origen, the third-century scholar, counselled four levels of interpretation of any sacred text – plain, allegorical, moral and mystical – and traditional scholars of all religions have known this, several panelists at the Parliament noted that the ‘hate’ passages of sacred texts (for example, the ‘sword verses’ of the Quran, Chapter 9, verse 5, indeed verses 1 to 29) have been taken increasingly literally, at the level of ‘plain’, which was not their original intention. The Protestants were the first to read the Christian Bible literally, rather than allegorically, morally or mystically. ‘Jihad’ was originally meant to describe the battle within one’s own soul, not the slaying of others. Hate in scripture has been increasingly used as justification for violence against the hated.

## Love

Marjorie Spock, the translator of Steiner’s initial 1910 lectures referring to Love and Hate, inserted square brackets to explain and soften the power of Steiner’s terms. One sees it written in this way: ‘... inner experiences of Love [desire] and Hate [aversion]’. I had to make sure of the original German, and consulted Fred Amrine on this matter. He affirmed that the words recorded from Steiner’s lecture are *Liebe* and *Hass*; the translator Marjorie Spock added the bracketed words ‘desire’ and ‘aversion’. (In later lectures, Steiner tended towards ‘sympathy’ and ‘antipathy’, though he sometimes reverted to their more powerful roots, Love and Hate.)

The German word ‘*Liebe*’ comes from the same root as Love, the proto-Indo-European root *\*leubh-*, which has spawned other related words, including ‘belief’, ‘believe’, ‘libido’ and ‘by your leave’. *Liebe* has many meanings, from affection to lust. The Greeks separated these meanings into different words, the main three being *Philia* (primarily friendship), *Eros* (primarily sexual passion) and *agape* (boundless waterfalls of love, what Matthew 22:37 and Luke 10:27 counsel in relationship to divinity). Other Greek terms include *storge*, *mania*, *ludus*, *pragma* and *cathexis*. In English and German, the words *Liebe* and Love gather the many varied meanings of the Greeks into one word.

Steiner (1912/1998; see also Nesfield-Cookson, 2000, p. 29f.) also wraps several notions into the one term:

Love mediated by way of the senses is the wellspring of creative power, of that which is coming into being. Without sense-born love, nothing material would exist in the world; without spiritual love, nothing spiritual can arise in evolution. When we practice love, cultivate love, creative forces pour into the world. ... Love is the creative force in the world.

From Steiner in the same source, love ‘is not capable of diminution or amplification’. That’s an amazing wake-up call. It reminds me of the revolutionary claim in *A Course in Miracles* (Shucman 2007) that there are no larger or smaller miracles: any miracle is the working of spirit into the consensual reality of the physical world. If you think about this claim, you perceive its power. Even though my experience of Love may be limited, the source of Love is unbounded. Love is the source.

That omnipresence helps one understand that Steiner perceived Love not as a genetic or chemical reflex, but rather as a pre-existing field or zone of life-force into which one could awaken. When it works in the soul, it is aroused by an experience, but does not originate in one’s DNA. Actually, one’s awareness enters the field of Love that was already omnipresent.

This is extremely important and often difficult to understand, as we have been trained to experience the passions of Love originating from within ourselves. From that point of view, a chemical or genetic explanation appears reasonable: 'I love you' means that something changes in my chemicals, and thus my behaviour towards you. However, rather than originating from within the individual, we can begin to perceive Love and Hate as sourced from the entire cosmos.

Viewed through Ken Wilber's four-quadrant model (presented in many different books, including Wilber, 2000), Love and Hate are thus seen not as originating in Exterior-Individual (upper-right quadrant of his system, the site of genes, structures and chemicals) then appearing as Interior-Individual (what I think of as 'I'); rather, Love and Hate originate in Exterior-Collective (lower-right quadrant), as an essential aspect of the entire cosmos.

## Hate

The English word 'Hate' and the German 'Hass' have the same etymology, back through *\*hataz* to Proto-Indo-European *\*kad*, suggesting that the initial 'h' of Hate should be pronounced with more throat force, bringing in more of a throat-clearing 'k' sound.

The American Bar Association defines 'hate speech' as 'speech that offends, threatens, or insults' (Katz & Passo, 2014). In many cases, that is protected by the First Amendment to the US Constitution, except when expressed 'as obscenity, defamation, incitement to riot, and fighting words' and when the violence evoked is 'imminent'. Note how all of these terms clearly depict will-forces in movement. Love and Hate in their foundations are not so much feelings but impulses to act – that is, expressions of will. Thoughts and feelings come later.

Steiner (1924) observed that Hate is spoken more often than Love: 'If one were to go into the true statistics it would be found that there is a hundred times – really a hundred times – more hatred than love among human beings'. He was comparing derogatory comments with praise. As Hate functions to separate one from another, this observation indicates the importance to the sensitive individuality of boundaries of body, soul and spirit.

How does Hate come to exist as a player in the depths of the soul? Contemplate the following examples of the zone of Hate.

### Example – ophidiophobia

Part of the year, I lead outdoor tours at Mountain Seas Eco-Resort in Australia, where there are venomous snakes. At the beginning of the tour, I explain the difference between poison, which comes from something you eat and mainly affects the digestive organs, and venom, which is injected and affects mainly the nervous system. Venom especially has a vector of antipathy coming towards you. The snake in that setting relates to the mythic triumvirate of eagle in the heights, warm-blooded animal in the middle, and snake in the depths. This parallels the thinking/knowing, feeling, and willing/doing triumvirate, also known as cognitive/affective/volitional. I consider it a success when the tour group sights a snake, typically 10–20 feet away. Most people volunteer, 'I hate snakes', but some people are much more prone to have very strong reactions. A portion of the participants become anxious. Indeed, a full third of all people have a significant fear of snakes, termed ophidiophobia.

Though there is a common notion that the fear comes from inheritance of our ancestors' responses to snakes, the lack of a rational self-preserving response stands out. Some people freak out, and bash away through the brush, at risk of hurting themselves, and also risking an encounter with another snake at much closer quarters. Rather than arousal that serves survival – the Darwinians' explanation – it seems more apparent that the sight (or anticipation) of a snake has triggered an entry into the zone of Hate. Is this a specific fear of that particular snake? No, the response is general. In response to the threat of venom – a kind of Hate – injected into the body, the reaction of Hate as an impulse of the will has come from the depths of the soul to respond to the sensory experience. Hate stimulates fight, flight or freeze, all phenomena of will.

## Glossophobia

Fear of public speaking (glossophobia, from 'glossa', meaning tongue) is as frequent as ophidiophobia, and we can understand this in terms of the response to a snake. Fear of public speaking is often touted as greater than any other fear, though the methods to determine these percentages differ. Some studies claim that 75% of all people have some level of glossophobia. The similar and more serious Social Anxiety Disorder is measured at 7% of the population (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 202). As the main criterion of Social Anxiety Disorder is 'marked fear or anxiety about one or more social situations in which the individual is exposed to possible scrutiny by others', we can read into this the anticipation of Hate.

When you speak in front of others, attention is turned to you, and that attention might have venom in it, affecting your nervous system or your life. Anyone who has stood before a group of people knows that this concern is not unfounded. One experiences the energy of Hate in the audience, and feels it as venom. One enters the realm of Hate, in the instance of the speaking or in anticipation of it. The snake, or the audience with its potential snakes, triggers an entry into the zone of Hate. The cover of Babiak and Hare's *Snakes in Suits: When Psychopaths Go to Work* (2006) shows a man in a suit from his nose down, with no eyes to personalize him, with a large snake wrapped around his neck and flowing down his front as in a necktie. From Steiner (1907):

A feeling of hatred directed at another is very real, and for one who can see in the spiritual world, it is much more potent than hitting him with a stick. Although the terrible thing does not take place right before our eyes, yet it is so.

## General Hate phenomena

Disgust is a common aspect of Hate. How do you feel about your fingernails after they're cut? Or your faeces after evacuation? Or finding yourself in a toilet where you discover too late that there is no toilet paper? Noting your responses upon reading this list may help identify how Hate moves in your being.

Some teachers oppose love to fear. However, the precursor of fear is Hate. You first have to differentiate an object from you, and then begin to feel repugnance for it; then you can fear it. Steiner (1909a): 'Fear is suppressed Hate'.

Does this mean that Hate, rather than being swept under the rug as a 'deplorable', should be appraised as a power on a par with Love? Let us examine some of the background of the polarity of Love and Hate.

## Background in psychology

Sigmund Freud traced all of human behaviour to 'the pleasure principle', wherein the biological organism seeks pleasure. Later he included the flip-side: not only the organism seeking pleasure but avoiding displeasure that appears as pain or discomfort. These preferences play out mostly in unconscious feelings that guide behaviour. Without thinking, you take down the bag of Oreo cookies from the shelf, where you have the experience of 'waking up' with a bag of Oreo cookies in your hand, and recollect the action of taking that bag from its shelf as if in a vague distant dream. 'Pleasure made me do it!' – Love as will in action.

Occasionally one experiences barely conscious affirmations of pleasure, 'I like it', or displeasure, 'I don't like it'. On the one hand, these are primitive expletives that say little about the quality of one's experience. Their binary nature – like/dislike, sympathy/antipathy – shows the beginnings of the experience of the polarity.

In 1921, Freud also formulated a love-principle. His translator called it libido, which, you may recall, comes from the same word-root as *Liebe* and Love. 'Libido ... the energy, regarded as a quantitative magnitude (though not at present actually measurable) ... of those instincts which have to do with all that may be comprised under the word "love"' (Freud, 1921/1990; web-sourced). By this, Freud meant sexual energy, and he subsumed all other aspects of Love under sexual attraction, arising from the experiences of the infant in relation to the cross-gender parent. Freud's formulation came after Steiner proposed Love and Hate. Freud did not flesh out his concept in the way that Steiner related it to perception and memory.

Steiner built upon the philosophy of Franz Brentano (1874/2014), who had named Love and Hate as fundamental, making these concepts operational. The psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion (1962, and in later writings) relied on Love and Hate in his approach to human psychology.

## The complexity of Hate

We have to level the playing field by noting some challenging aspects of Love and some positive functions of Hate. Love can merge into spaciness (ditziness), histrionics, mania, obsession and fantasy. Hate can assist one to cut away illusion from perception, to discern the good from the faulty, to set boundaries. A dose of Hate is necessary to distinguish myself from the rest of the world – in a word, to individuate. The parent learns to weather the child screaming 'I hate you!' because it is part of the child's necessary process of separation. Once individuated, it is possible to have a relationship with another; before individuation, merged feelings confuse. Indeed, Hate as a vector of destruction is necessary in many life processes, most importantly the mammoth destruction that takes place in the gut whenever we eat. Look around you in your day, and you will see nothing more destructive than the destruction taking place in your digestion – out of sight, out of mind, yet very close by.

Contemplate another story that gives Hate its due. In the distant past, the sky father Ouranos was conjoined with the earth mother Gaia in perpetual intercourse. There was no place in the middle for anything to grow, including the children of Ouranos, who struggled in a stifling darkness. What held the sky to the earth was the penetrating penis of Ouranos. Kronos castrated Ouranos, and the sky father lifted off of the earth mother. Hate, by separating, created space in which plants, animals and human beings could grow.

Thus, we must understand the positive side of Hate before we enter the more conventional rejection of Hate, what we can recognize as the ironic hate of Hate. Without the catabolic principle, the anabolic principle cannot exist. However, though I find it has great value to grant Hate an important place in the human psyche, there is an imbalance. Martin Luther King, Jr. summarized this imbalance thus: 'Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that'.

## Polarity

Many thinkers have created polarities of Love–Hate that use different terms, ranging from Freud's pleasure versus unpleasure and eros versus thanatos, to William James's tender-minded versus tough-minded, to Alan Watts' prickles versus goo. Steiner brings it back to Love versus Hate.

## The Love–Hate continuum

Figure 1 provides a larger diagram, showing many of the polarities along a continuum between strong Hate to strong Love, with weaker expressions in the centre. Each of these terms can indicate an expression of Love or Hate, or indicate something to which one responds with Love or Hate.



Figure 1 The polarity of Love and Hate.

The furthest-out archetype of Hate is Shiva the destroyer. (See Tresemer, 2013, for more on Steiner's philosophy in relation to Shiva.) Destruction begins with separation of one thing from another. Destruction threatens annihilation (and can trigger reactions named by Wilfred Bion as nameless dread, or Heinz Kohut as disintegration anxiety, or by Ernest Jones as aphanisis). The destruction never gets to complete annihilation, though one can experience fear of this possibility. 'Neti neti' is a Sanskrit formula meaning 'not this, not this' – in other words, 'my sense of my Self is not this thing that I see, nor this other thing, nor that, nor that ...'. The individual separates, over and over again, paring down until there is nothing left.

The archetype of Love is Brahma the creator. 'Tat tvam asi' is a Sanskrit formula meaning 'That art thou' – in other words, one might affirm at the Love end of the polarity, 'I am identical with every thing that I perceive; I am conjoint with every "that". I am that, and I am that too. And I am that ...'. We all share in a single consciousness, a oneness in which duality and multiplicity are only illusion; indeed, those are part of the grand unity, along with myself!

The ultimate experience of oneness involves a kind of disappearance into Unity (e.g. Chandogya Upanishad 6.8.7), into creativity itself, into Brahma.

The extreme of Love – merging into Unity – and the extreme of Hate – annihilation into emptiness as nothingness – bear a resemblance in that neither has room for individual awareness.

Though Steiner can be quoted in favour of the reduction and elimination of Hate, he also speaks about the uses of aspects of Hate – the importance of discernment, of cutting away illusion, even the importance of anger. While noting the familiar polarity – 'Love and kindness are the obverse of noble anger' – Steiner (1909b) claims their interconnection: 'Life shows us that a person who is unable to flare up with anger at injustice or folly will never develop true kindness and love. ... Anger ... is the teacher of love'.

When Steiner referred to likes and dislikes, he meant Love and Hate in action, not just flitting preferences. Thus you can read him with Love and Hate in mind when he says (Steiner, 1904/1994, p. 45): 'The more we have ennobled our inclinations, our likes and dislikes, so that they submit without force or compulsion to what we recognize as our duty, the higher we stand as human beings'. A sentence like this slides by so easily until you pause to consider that he is setting the entire spectrum of Love and Hate in relation to the maturity of one's being to a calling that causes the polarity to 'submit'.

In the longer study, a continuum of Love and Hate becomes very useful when folded in upon itself to become fourfold: strong expressions of both, weak expressions of both, and one high while the other is low. In this way, many phenomena can be understood and worked through. Then Love and Hate can be applied to a wide range of experiences, including mental health stressors and therapies.

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## Notes on contributor



David Tresemer, PhD, is President of the Association for Anthroposophic Psychology (USA), whose activities and courses can be found at [www.AnthroposophicPsychology.org](http://www.AnthroposophicPsychology.org). This article is a much compressed version of a longer study on love, hate and soul. It extends the approach of anthroposophic psychology as given in two recent books edited by Tresemer: *The Counselor ... As if Soul and Spirit Matter* (Steiner Books, 2015) and *Slow Counselling* (Lindisfarne Press, 2017). For more information on other publications and endeavours, see [www.IlluminatedRelationships.com](http://www.IlluminatedRelationships.com).

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