

Eros and Agape Love

Quote 99 in: Quotes from Other Sources – General Spiritual Support – www.garyvollbracht.com

Personal Transformation and a New Creation: The Spiritual Revolution of Beatrice Bruteau

Edited by Ilea Delio

From Chapter 9. A Grateful Reader

by JOHN SHEA

One of the psycho-spiritual states she develops in a number of places is how *eros* and *agape* interrelate within our experience. When she focused on this psycho-spiritual map, she often just noted the contrast between *eros* as loving for the sake of the lover and *agape* as loving for the sake of the beloved. But in *God's Ecstasy* she charts their dynamic unfolding:

The bond of the community is love, especially agape love. But look at the dynamic of personal being even from the point of view of erotic love. Eros desires to be united with the other as a good for oneself. Many erotic relationships begin with desire for the descriptions of the other, but if the desire runs deep, if there is strong attraction to the other as person, then an interesting thing happens. One is not satisfied with merely being intimate with the descriptive reality of the other. One wants to be close to the interior of the other, to feel the other on the inside, as the other feels. One yearns to be with the other not as the other appears to be but as the other really is from the other's own profound sense of self. How can we achieve that? We have to abandon our own point of view and strive to enter into the beloved's point of view, to see and feel as the beloved's own welfare together with the beloved. But that is agape. If you really want to fulfill yourself, you have to abandon yourself and enter another. Isn't that amazing?

As I read it, the logic of the unfolding is this: if persons begin with eros—loving another for the benefits they receive— and follow carefully where that love leads them, they will find themselves pulled into agape-loving another for the good of the one loved. The final paradoxical flourish is that loving the other for the other's good is how lovers find their own fulfillment. Losing their life, they find it.

However, Beatrice cannot resist stepping out of this description and commenting, "Isn't that amazing?" Besides the very sage tracking of how love consciousness unfolds, the sheer wonder of the love dynamics catches her and she wants readers to participate in her amazement. So she invites them in. It worked for me. When I used this eros-agape map to see my love relationships, there was enough of a fit for me to be amazed by this subtle beckoning to something more that accompanies what I thought was my preferential quest. Could it be that we are seduced into the ultimate reality we are even when we follow a path prescribed by a lesser rendition of ourselves? That, I surmise, is providential pressure, the patient and persistent lure that brings us into the consciousness that the loss of the erotic self is the finding of the agapic self. We become who we most are—what Beatrice calls "the secret self," "the naked self," "the bottommost self"—by paying attention to the lures built into the dynamics of our love experiences.