Eros Love

Eros was the Greek god of love and was a prominent god in Greek mythology. He was depicted as a young winged boy with bow and arrow ready to short arrows or darts in to the hearts of mortals. His arrows came in two types: golden with dove feathers to arouse love, or arrows made of lead and owl feathers that caused indifference. He could be bitter sweet and cruel or charming and he was depicted as very beautiful. He was, however, dangerous and unscrupulous. *Eros* is referred to in Homer's Iliad as sexual desire. The Roman name for *Eros*, which you may recognise, was Cupid.

Down through the centuries *eros* love has always been used to mean romantic love and it is the root of the English word erotic. It is the attraction between the sexes and lovers may kiss and show affection, although this love is not necessarily sexual in nature as *eros* love can be a platonic love for another. *Eros* points to sensual love where two people, as lovers, are totally absorbed in each other in a romantic and spontaneous relationship. It encompasses the feelings of passion and desire and is often called "falling in love" although another name for such feelings is "puppy love". Romantic love includes the chemical reaction that happens between two people, the sudden 'spark' that begins a relationship, the 'blushing' when given a compliment. *Eros* love on its own is typically fleeting and is often called infatuation; it tends to fade and usually it does not produce long-standing relationships as long as it stays romantic.

Cultural traditions often dictate the form a courtship will take yet romance can often exist within cultural limitations. In many countries over the centuries, and even today, men and women marry without the illusions of love and romance. They marry to continue the bloodlines, yet romance and love can exist either within the marriage or as an adjunct.

Many books have been written on the subject of *eros* love and Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet would be one of the best known. Over the last century, popular romance books have risen in popularity and films ensure their popularity by spicing up their stories with their concepts of romantic love affairs. Unfortunately, these books and films are giving a mistaken understanding of real love. Rather than just romantic love, with real love there is an attraction based on common interests and a genuine 'liking' for each other. It is good to be friends first (*Phileo* love) and understand the other person as well as love them. Possibly due to the connotations of romantic literature, many people expect passionate love to continue throughout their years of marriage and when this does not happen they become disheartened and disillusioned and sometimes end the marriage on that premise. The biggest mistake people make is to equate true love with eros love only.

The English word 'erotic' conjures up pictures of indulgent desire, often called 'lust'. This is a base, unreasoning desire which is enticing, tempting and impulsive but it is also unstable, foolish and self-willed. Lust does no honour to either party and it is futile because it always leads to punishment. Lust is deceitful and harmful because those who flirt with it not only destroy themselves but those with whom they come in contact.

On the other hand, the highest form of *eros* love, the affection of romance, can transform into a permanent love if joined with *Phileo, Storge* and A*gape* forms of love. A good marriage moves forward from the passion of love and strengthens its foundations and builds on a close and understanding friendship based on a secure and committed love which puts the other person first and which deepens over time. *Eros* love on its own cannot form the basis for a strong marriage. It needs the *Storge* (pronounced stor-gay) kind of love which is marked by deep feelings of affection and is committed to the other person and also the *Agape* love which is the highest form of unconditional love for another. Without all three types of love in a marriage, you have a recipe for disaster.