

Do only fools rush in? The conflicts underlying romantic compromises

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“Wise men say only fools rush in, but I can't help falling in love with you”.

Elvis Presley

Abstract: A conflict between emotional and intellectual attitudes is common: The intellect is concerned with the general and the stable whereas emotions are engaged with the particular and the volatile. These differences indicate the need to find some integration between the two. In the romantic realm, this conflict is clearly evident and often results in romantic compromises, i.e., giving up a romantic value for nonromantic value. This article examines the nature of romantic compromises and discusses the major conflicts underlying them: (a) the conflict between life and love, (b) the tendency not to be satisfied with one's lot, (c) the ability to simultaneously hold various perspectives, and (d) the brief nature of romantic intensity.

Keywords: love; compromises; conflict; wisdom.

1. *The head-heart conflict*

I told this heart of mine our love could never be,
But then I hear your voice and something stirs inside of me,
Somehow I can't resist the memory of your kiss,
Guess my heart has a mind of its own.

Connie Francis

There is a long tradition criticizing the rationality and functionality of emotions. In this tradition, which pervades much of contemporary culture, emotions are regarded as impediments to intellectual reasoning and hence as obstacles to optimal functioning. The head-heart conflict has been acknowledged in both philosophy and popular culture. Thus, Blaise Pascal argued that “The heart has its reasons which reason does not understand”. The title of the above-cited song by Connie Francis is “My heart has a mind of its own”. More

recently, Daniel Kahneman has suggested differentiating between two systems of thinking: a fast intuitive system and a slow intellectual system. And Gerd Gigerenzer explains why our intuitive gut feelings are often right (Gigerenzer 2007; Kahneman 2011; cf. de Sousa 1987).

The differences between the two systems are real, but both systems are of great evolutionary value. In many circumstances, emotions are the optimal response (see e.g., Rocklage and Fazio 2016; Zajonc 1980). Although emotions are not always functional, they are tremendously important in circumstances concerning matters of the heart. We should neither suppress our emotions nor allow them to overwhelm us excessively; we should aim at a balance combining thought and emotions. The popular notion of “Emotional Intelligence”, which refers to such integration, indicates its value in everyday life.

Needless to say, my use of the terms “heart” and “head” is metaphorical. We know that the brain, rather than the heart, underlies mental phenomena. However, in everyday usages the heart is still associated with emotions and love, while the head is associated with the intellect. Using these terms does not imply the presence within our head of two little creatures, one a small computing genius and the other a streetcar named desire. Rather there is one mental system that has several modes that are expressed in various ways and intensities according to its different activities.

Commenting on La Rochefoucauld’s maxim, “The head is always fooled by the heart”, Jon Elster asks: Why should the heart bother to fool the head? Can’t it just get on with it and do whatever it wants? The answer Elster suggests is that it is an important part of our self-image that we believe ourselves to be swayed by reason rather than by passion. Elster terms this tendency “addiction to reason” and rightly claims that it makes those who are so addicted irrational rather than rational. A rational person would know that under certain conditions it is better to follow her emotional intuitions than to use more elaborate intellectual procedures (Elster 1999: 91; cf. Ben-Ze’ev 2000: 165).

In the romantic realm, the opposite tendency can also be found: the heart is sometimes fooled by the head. We can speak of an “addiction to romance” in which people convince themselves that they are staying in their dull marriages because they still love their partner, while their motivating reason for staying is actually the cost of leaving. Similarly, people might choose to marry due to the financial and social status of their partner, while convincing themselves that they are marrying out of love. In many circumstances, it is considered more commendable to act for romantic reasons rather than for cold deliberative intellectual ones.

It is evident then that contrary to prevailing ideals, we do integrate the head in romantic decisions of the heart. In this sense, romantic compromises,

in which we give up a romantic value for a nonromantic one, are not different from many other romantic experiences. Romantic behavior takes place in a reality where there are limitations and obstacles; in our effort to overcome them, we need the head to be part of the process. The heart may point to an ideal place, but the head should examine the road leading to this place, taking into account the pitfalls and possible obstacles. It is necessary to combine the two in making an optimal decision. In the romantic realm, the heart should be given considerable value, as we love to please our heart, but not an exclusive value, as we also love a comfortable life. Even in the issue of choosing a romantic partner, which seems to be the exclusive terrain of the heart, the notion of finding the “right” partner implies that the intellectual head should be involved in the search. The romantic heart is often considered to be short-sighted, and its wish for long-term love should be assisted by the head, which knows more about long-term circumstances.

Despite the crucial weight the heart plays in romantic matters, the common and celebrated wish is to give absolute priority to the heart over the head. This, however, can be unwise in many circumstances, because following our heart does not always involve acting according to our basic characteristics and values. Thus, not all emotional states are genuine expressions of profound love – some of them are tentative expressions of superficial circumstances that we would not want to endure. And it is hard to know when the yearning heart’s cry is real.

2. *Romantic compromises*

Like fire, compromise is both necessary and dangerous to human life.

Martin Benjamin

The head-heart conflict in the romantic realm is clearly manifested in the phenomenon of romantic compromises. We are called upon to make compromises in many aspects of our lives, but whereas people usually have no inhibitions in publicly admitting their compromises in most areas, they seldom do so concerning their love lives. This is mainly due to the perceived ideal nature of love and hence the feeling of failure when the ideal is not fulfilled. Here it is not merely that you give up an insignificant aspect; it is rather that you fail to fulfill something of great value, quite often a precious dream.

Romantic compromises are the most common and painful syndrome of our romantic life. In romantic compromises, we give up a romantic value, such as intense, passionate desire, in exchange for a non-romantic value, such

as a comfortable life without financial worries. Nevertheless, in our hearts we keep yearning for the possible desire, for the road not taken, and the romantic conflict continues. We can distinguish two major types of romantic compromises: (1) compromises on romantic freedom that are made when entering a committed relationship such as marriage, and (2) compromises on the choice of partner. In the first type, the major concern is that we might give up alluring possible alternatives while still continuing to yearn for them. In the second type, another concern is added: accepting the negative aspects of the partner (Ben-Ze'ev 2011).

Realizing that your partner is imperfect is not highly problematic as we are all aware that no-one is perfect; hence, the fact that one imperfect person is in a romantic relationship with another imperfect person is natural. The more severe conflict in romantic compromises is giving up an enticing feasible alternative and yet continuing to yearn for it. In contemporary society, there are so many such romantic alternatives, and this can tempt people in a good relationship to go in search of an even "better" (or at least different) one – and the very fact of such a search can lead them to neglect and ruin their current relationship. You might believe that your partner is good, or at least good enough for you; but the presence of many seemingly attractive and feasible options can make you restless. In the words of Nat King Cole, "In a restless world like this is, love is ended before it's begun". And since Nat King Cole first sang this beautiful song, the romantic world has become much more restless. These days, the romantic excitement often endures merely till the morning after. As one elderly divorcee said, "Men's love for me lasts as long as my makeup does. Their intense romantic desire at night disappears in the morning when my makeup dissolves".

Coping with the presence of available tempting alternatives is difficult. Changes, and in particular fast changes, are the ultimate model of our throw-away and restless society, which is based upon overconsumption and excessive production of short-lived or disposable items. We are addicted to rapid novelty that takes place in constant flux (Bauman 2003; Rosa 2013). For many people in our Western society, remaining in one place is tantamount to treading water. There is no rest for lovers, and not because the road of love on which they are traveling is not good; it might be a bit boring, but it is still a valuable road – probably, one of the best in human history. Yet the novel road not taken is seen to be more attractive and there appear to be many roads from which to choose. Chasing after a short-term fantasy is often the problem and not the solution. Fantasies about what is or might be "out there" often prove to be a poor substitute for what we already have. We often become enslaved by our own fantasies about the possible; in the words of the Eagles

in “Hotel California”: “We are all just prisoners here, of our own device”. A better understanding of the nature of romantic compromises might free us from this prison, or at least make life within the prison walls more enjoyable.

In romantic compromises we typically do not completely ignore romantic considerations, but just reduce their weight. Marrying someone whom you do not love at all is not a romantic compromise; it is a renunciation of romance. Typical romantic compromises are more complicated, as they reduce the value of romantic considerations in favor of increasing the value of other considerations.

3. *The conflicts underlying romantic compromises*

If passion drives you, let reason hold the reins.

Benjamin Franklin

Romantic compromises and romantic conflicts are not accidents; their generation is based upon central human characteristics. Here, I will briefly examine a few such characteristics: (a) the conflict between life and love, (b) the tendency not to be satisfied with one’s lot, (c) the ability to simultaneously hold various perspectives, and (d) the brief nature of romantic intensity.

3.1. The conflict between life and love

Life is not a problem to be solved, but a reality to be experienced.

Soren Kierkegaard

There is love, of course. And then there’s life, its enemy.

Jean Anouilh

In life we cannot have everything we want and must compromise by settling for situations that seem relatively close to our ideals, or at least the closest we can get in the given circumstances. Compromises can be characterized as involving dissatisfied acceptance of a gap between a perceived feasible desire and our actual situation. In compromises we are in a situation that we have chosen to be but one that we would prefer was different. Our choice stems from the fact that we are limited creatures, we cannot always meet our norms or achieve our ideals, and we sometimes have to settle for something less than we might want. Giving up an alluring romantic option is no small matter; the forsaken alternative might cast a lingering shadow over our lives. Our awareness of the road not taken can remain part and parcel of our lives, and sometimes this awareness becomes more oppressive as time passes

The decision to give preference to love or life is usually not clear-cut. Typically, it involves many considerations, each of which has different weights. Love is a significant aspect in a flourishing life – hence, it should not be neglected. However, a flourishing life is also part and parcel of profound love. Many people will not stay in a romantic relationship that inhibits their personal flourishing. Marring someone because he would make a wonderful father is not an unacceptable consideration in choosing a long-term romantic partner – though it should not be an exclusive consideration or even a major one. Princess Diana once remarked: “They say it is better to be poor and happy than rich and miserable, but how about a compromise like moderately rich and just moody?”. Similarly, one might claim that it is better to be poor and in love than rich and without love, but how about a compromise like being moderately rich and just loving (rather being madly in love with) each other?

Love is characterized by the profound wish to be with the beloved, and lovers invest whatever they can to fulfill this wish. There are, however, cases in which the lover decides, out of profound love, to leave the beloved as the lover thinks that staying with the beloved will make the beloved miserable in the long term. In the song “I will always love you”, which many people regard as the greatest love song of all time, despite the protagonist’s profound love for her beloved, she knows that she will be in his way and therefore she decides to leave him. Nevertheless, she is certain that she will think of him at every step of her way and will always love him. Here, profound love has led the woman to make a romantic compromise and to put what is best for him above their profound love. This is indeed a very painful, brave, and rare solution to the conflict between life and love.

Compromises are unavoidable – the debatable issue concerns more specific aspects of the compromise, and in particular whether in the long term the feeling of being romantically compromised disappears or at least decreases. In order to make a viable decision to compromise, the chosen road should enhance the partners’ flourishing in general and their romantic flourishing in particular. In this sense, they will feel that despite making a compromise, they are not compromising themselves.

The prevailing romantic ideology is essentially wrong in always preferring love over life on the basis of “love always wins” and “love always finds a way” (Ben-Ze’ev and Goussinsky 2008). Life might not be the greatest enemy of love, but it often involves considerations that conflict with or oppose the romantic ones. Admitting that in some circumstances, life should have precedence over love is to admit the necessity of romantic compromises. Life is indeed not a problem to be solved, but a reality to take into account.

3.2. Feeling dissatisfied

No artist is pleased. [There is] no satisfaction whatever at any time.

There is only a queer divine dissatisfaction, a blessed unrest that keeps us marching and makes us more alive than the others.

Martha Graham

The human tendency to feel dissatisfied is of great evolutionary value since it forces us to continually seek to improve our situation. Thus, Immanuel Kant argues that *reason* is never satisfied with the understanding it currently has; it is always restlessly searching for a more complete explanation. Similarly, William Irvine claims that the process of evolution dictates that we feel dissatisfied with any stable circumstance, whatever it may be (Rohlf 2010; Irvine 2006). The urge for more and better is of significant value: we keep trying to improve our current situation by not missing out on better options.

People suffering from senility can be continuously satisfied, but this is because they have lost contact with reality. A measure of dissatisfaction is part of being in touch with a reality that is seldom as good as we want it to be. Overcoming those obstacles with which we are not satisfied makes our life more meaningful. Being dissatisfied prevents us from resting on our laurels and becoming complacent. The dissatisfaction in romantic love is expressed in romantic compromises, in which people accept the given romantic relationship with some level of dissatisfaction that stems from their yearning for a better option.

Feeling dissatisfied is not limited to circumstances in which you do not have much. This is clearly expressed, for example, in (a) the tendency to “miswant,” and (b) the fact that greater development and education do not decrease dissatisfaction.

According to Daniel Gilbert and Timothy Wilson (2000), we often have the tendency “to *miswant*”: to desire things that we won’t like once we get them. Gilbert and Wilson explain this tendency as a consequence of our limited information about ourselves, about the specific experience, and about how compatible the two are. Because we lack this information, the validity of our prediction about our future desired experiences is limited. We might know that we desire a certain person now, as we feel it in our mind and body, but since we do not know ourselves and the other person well enough, it could be a “miswant”. In certain cases, we stop desiring someone once we begin to spend more time with him or her. The bad experience of the morning-after effect is one expression of such miswant. The distorted cognitive prediction concerning the nature of the desired experience can also refer to the length and impact

of the desired experience. Gilbert and Wilson further argue that people tend to overestimate the duration of emotional events. Thus, people tend to overrate the positive impact of a desired experience and are often disappointed to find that the experience is less positive than expected. For instance, the expectations about a long-lasting desired sexual relationship can crash a few minutes after its culmination.

Another factor underlying our dissatisfaction is the fact that our greater development and education do not decrease dissatisfaction. Education increases the agent's degrees of freedom and hence opens up the agent's horizons further by revealing more unfulfilled valuable options; accordingly, the agent's satisfaction does not increase but often even decreases. In the romantic realm, this phenomenon is expressed in feeling that one is romantically compromised in light of the many romantic roads not travelled. Similarly, greater financial independence, access to resources, and equal opportunities might increase happiness but they also reveal the many roads not taken. A greater number of options can improve our lives while simultaneously increasing the feeling that we are missing out on many possibilities. This kind of (partial) dissatisfaction is expressed in Bertrand Russell's observation that "to be without some of the things you want is an indispensable part of happiness" (1930: 15). Similarly, Anthony Kenny says: "Increase in education and sensitivity brings with it increase in the number of desires, and a corresponding lesser likelihood of their satisfaction. Instruction and emancipation in one way favour happiness, and in another militate against it. To increase a person's chances of happiness, in the sense of fullness of life, is *eo ipso* to decrease his chances of happiness, in the sense of satisfaction of desire (1965: 102)".

3.3. Holding multiple perspectives

Human mental capacities provide us with the ability to hold multiple perspectives at the same time and hence to better understand our complex reality. This ability allows us to prioritize our values, that is, to retain certain values and to compromise on others. People cannot pursue all their values simultaneously, even though they might continue to maintain their belief in the adequacy of these values (de Sousa 2007).

This capacity to hold multiple perspectives can create ambivalence when we perceive both positive and negative values in the same object. Such ambivalence can result from simultaneously accessible conflicting beliefs within the intellectual system or from a conflict between the intellectual and emotional systems (Ajzen 2001). The main difference between these systems is that the intellectual system attempts to arrange all these perspectives into one comprehensive viewpoint; it cannot bear the affirmation and negation of the same

claim at the same time. The emotional system can tolerate such ambiguity.

In her excellent analysis of emotional ambivalence, Patricia Greenspan (1980) rejects the identification of ambivalence with irrationality. She argues that emotions are assessed by their appropriateness in the given circumstances and not necessarily by the agent's overall body of evidence. Whereas two contrary judgments cannot be both true, two contrary emotions might both be appropriate for different reasons. Unlike intellectual judgments, emotional attitudes are partial in the sense that they are based on reactions to particular facts, rather than on considerations of all pertinent reasons. Constructive ambiguity might be valuable not merely in a relationship between two parties in which both have not yet fully made up their minds, but also concerning the agent's own attitude – self-constructive ambiguity can be valuable when the agent has not arrived at a conclusive decision. Greenspan believes that conflicting emotional extremes can sometimes serve a purpose that would not be served by impartial moderation, because commitment to different perspectives can motivate behavior that is unlikely to arise from the emotional detachment that is typical of broad intellectual considerations. Hence, the “logic” of emotions permits ambivalence.

Romantic ambivalence is evident in romantic compromises. The emotional attitudes toward your partner might be ambivalent as, for instance, when you enjoy the sexual interactions with him, but consider him to be insensitive and intellectually inferior. Such an ambivalent attitude can generate the feeling that you are making a romantic compromise, since you could have a partner toward whom you would feel less ambivalent. Although love requires a positive general evaluation of the beloved's individuality as a whole, it does not necessarily involve a positive evaluation of this person's every aspect and activity. True, lovers consider many of the beloved's characteristics as virtues where others see faults; nevertheless, lovers are not completely blind to the faults of their beloveds.

The need to make a compromise is compatible with recognizing the perspectives of others. Understanding these perspectives involves at least an appreciation, and to a certain extent also an acceptance, of some of their concerns. Even in profound love, where compromises are less common, lovers must make various concessions; however, they typically do not consider these concessions as romantic compromises. There are also those who have been unable to establish a long-term profound love, either because they were not ready to compromise (or even to make concessions) or because their compromises were to no avail.

The ability to hold multiple perspectives is closely connected to the need to prioritize our values, which in turn enables us to make decisions in light

of our hierarchy of values. Moreover, our desires are broad in their scope (we want more than what we can have or believe we should have), are not very organized (they lack a clear order of priority and are frequently incompatible), and often do not take into account external constraints. Desires reflect our wish to overcome basic human limitations and inadequacies. Managing our desires requires prioritizing our values by drawing boundaries, setting ideals, and making compromises.

The normative boundaries that prevent us from engaging in desirable activities are typically contrary to our spontaneous inclinations, which express our momentary desires. If the norms were in accordance with these desires, no boundaries and no compromises would be necessary. In this sense, boundaries are highly inconvenient and maintaining them is a kind of compromise. But boundaries also protect us and generate pleasant feelings of comfort and security.

People in love occasionally feel chained by external constraints that prevent them from acting in accordance with their wild passions, yet they are ready to compromise their autonomy and let their beloved rob them of (some of) their liberty. They are willing to be chained to the beloved because they consider acting in accordance with their loving heart to be the greatest expression of freedom. Since it is our values that construct our boundaries, our autonomy is both expressed and constrained in this process. People are condemned to compromise in the sense that to some extent, they have to give up some of their values.

3.4. The brief nature of emotional attitudes

An emotion can only be controlled or destroyed by another emotion.

Spinoza, *Ethics*, IV, 7.

The feeling that we have made a romantic compromise can be generated not only in the conflict between life and love, but also in the conflict between different emotional attitudes and in particular between short-term acute emotions and enduring emotions. Typical acute emotions are brief because emotions usually occur when we perceive positive or negative *significant changes* in our personal situation, and changes are of relative brief duration. A change cannot persist for an extended period of time; after a while, we construe the change as normal and it no longer stimulates us. Moreover, the onset of an emotion mobilizes many of our resources in order to focus on the event that has triggered that emotion, and such mobilization cannot last forever (Ben-Ze'ev 2000: 13-18).

We can distinguish between short-term romantic intensity and long-term romantic profundity. Romantic intensity is a snapshot of a romantic experience at a given moment; it refers to a brief excitement, expressed in passionate, often sexual, desire. Romantic profundity is an ongoing romantic experience embodying acute occurrences of romantic intensity. Romantic profundity is not an isolated achievement; rather, it consists of ongoing, dynamically developing processes. Attaining a specific goal such as an orgasm might make us feel momentarily pleased but is insufficient to sustain long-term profound love (Ben-Ze'ev and Krebs 2017; Ben-Ze'ev 2014).

Romantic compromises express a kind of maturity. As in maturity, in compromises there is acceptance of our limitations and current situation. However, unlike maturity, the acceptance in compromises is mainly a behavioral acceptance rather than an attitudinal one. As long as the accepted situation is still regarded as a romantic compromise, deep down the agent does not actually accept it. The moment people wholeheartedly accept a compromise, it stops being an attitude involving compromising oneself. The dissonance between extrinsic behavior and intrinsic emotional attitudes is another hallmark of romantic compromises.

Maturity seems to act counter to novelty and excitement. No wonder young people are considered to be more emotional than older people. Intense emotions are typically elicited in the midst of unfinished business and hence are mainly concerned with the future; maturity is focused on the present and involves satisfaction with your current lot. Intense emotions are generated by change, while maturity involves getting accustomed to changes and perceiving them as less significant. In maturity, we enjoy familiarity rather than novelty. At the center of the happiness involved in intense love is excitement; at the center of the happiness involved in profound mature love is peacefulness (calmness) and serenity (Ben-Ze'ev and Krebs 2017; Krebs 2015; Mogilner *et al.* 2011). Similar findings indicate that the transition from youth to older age includes a shift in close social relations, which involves a change of emphasis from quantity to quality. Thus, it has been suggested that the main developmental task for younger couples is managing conflicts; the main task for older couples is mutual support (Carmichael, *et. al.* 2015; see also an interview with Robert Waldinger in *Harvard Gazette*, 2.2.2012).

The problem of romantic compromises becomes less acute as people grow older. The major factors of such compromises – that is, the presence of negative qualities in the partner and yearning for the possible – carry less weight in old age. Over time, people get accustomed to their spouse's negative aspects. They learn to live with them while minimizing their negative impact. In older age, when people realize that their time is running out and that their available alter-

natives are decreasing, they are more likely to accept their limitations and not feel that they are compromising themselves by not pursuing an attractive option. Moreover, as people in older age are more dependent on each other, the marital chains might turn into helping hands (Charles and Carstensen 2010). It seems that in old age, when cognitive capacities are decreasing and the physical capacities to achieve new alternatives are declining, the ability to be satisfied with your own lot significantly increases, and marital conflicts, as well as the experience of romantic compromises, decrease.

4. *The conflict between love and wisdom*

But the law of loving others could not be discovered by reason, because it is unreasonable.

Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*

The common perception of romantic love is that it involves no small measure of foolishness. We are all familiar with numerous songs stating that foolishness is essential for love. Romantic love is often seen as incompatible with wisdom, which involves taking a broad perspective. If indeed “all you need is love”, then those lovers who take into account a broad perspective, including non-romantic considerations, might be perceived to be actually betraying ideal love. Nevertheless, in many, though not all, circumstances, profound love entails behaving wisely. While sexual experiences, which are typically intense and superficial, are more likely to be foolish, enduring profound romantic experiences are more likely to be wise.

Wisdom is characterized as the ability to make good judgements that are based on knowledge and experience. The opposite of wisdom is not the lack of knowledge (ignorance), but rather not applying knowledge (and experience) in an appropriate manner. Indeed, foolishness and its synonym stupidity denote poor judgements, rash decisions, or careless mistakes. Accordingly, wisdom entails being prudent and sensible, taking into account long-term considerations, as well as postponing immediate satisfaction. In foolishness we do not assess all the relevant information and do not consider broader, long-term perspectives.

A marked characteristic of wise human behavior is making reasonable choices, including compromises, when faced with several valued possibilities. The refusal to compromise is often used as an excuse for wrong decisions and romantic failures. The unattainable wish to have everything and the necessity of making compromises are expressed in the pain of making choices, which is unavoidable in human life. As we have very limited ability

to change external reality, a central aspect of our life is to adapt our behavior to reality (Csikszentmihalyi 1990).

The foolish aspect of romantic love is often the result of according too much importance to excitement rather than to profundity. As indicated above, the value of excitement declines with age, while the value of personal characteristics such as calmness, caring, kindness, loyalty, and wisdom increases with age and with the length of the relationship. In fact, Ellen Berscheid claims that companionate love, which is based upon such characteristics, “may be the ‘staff of life’ for many relationships and a better basis for a satisfying marriage than romantic love” (Berscheid 2010).

Romantic love is a long-term attitude involving not merely exciting sexual desire but broader and profounder considerations related to being with the partner for a long time. As sexual excitement, often termed “lust,” is related to limited, brief experiences, wise broad intellectual considerations are not relevant; on the contrary, sometimes they hinder the attraction. However, if we wish to have a long-term profound romantic relationship, intellectual considerations are also relevant. In this sense, we should also be wise in romantic love.

It does not seem that romantic behavior in itself is foolish; in many circumstances, behaving romantically is the wisest behavior. I would also not characterize any sexual, or lustful, behavior in itself as foolish. The foolishness or wisdom of romantic activities depends on the given context. Thus, it is risky and usually foolish to make long-term decisions, such as getting married, that are based upon merely transitory feelings, like short-term lust. There are, however, some actions that are initially seen as foolish, such as marrying as a result of love at first sight, but that might later turn out to have been very wise. Likewise, someone might initially consider her partner to be a compromise because he does not score high according to certain social criteria, such as his physical appearance or social status, but this compromise could later give rise to profound love. In other cases, the partner’s lack of these characteristics could hinder the long-term love between the two because they have the negative effect of distracting the agent from adequately considering more essential characteristics such as kindness, caring, calmness, reciprocity, and respect. However, for many, when the dust and lust settle down, so does the brightness of superficial short-term characteristics; the value of other characteristics begins to emerge, and what was considered to be a romantic compromise can be perceived as the love of one’s life.

The way we integrate the head and the heart is essential to our romantic wellbeing. Accordingly, neither the head nor the heart can be our sole guide. Physical attraction is a great lure but sometimes a poor guide. Being only wise

and practical is also harmful, as it overlooks the essential aspect of romantic attraction. It is a mistake to marry merely because of external benefits or long-term speculations. Taking non-romantic features into consideration in one's romantic decisions is a type of romantic compromise that might be necessary, but when they are given too much weight, they can ultimately be harmful.

Clear glasses usually perceive reality better than rose-colored romantic glasses. For those who idealize love and believe that love can overcome all obstacles, clear glasses are worthless; these people will continue to disregard reality. Although there may be some benefits in overlooking certain difficulties, turning a blind eye, a deaf ear, and a foolish head to our environment and personal limitations can hardly be advantageous. Accordingly, lovers should not foolishly ignore reality, but should regard it wisely as a challenge with which to cope. This expresses a wise romantic faith and hope of overcoming many, though not all, of the obstacles we encounter in reality.

To sum up, romantic behavior takes place within a reality in which there are limitations and obstacles. The loving heart might point to an ideal place, but the wise head should examine the road leading there, taking into account the possible future obstacles. We should combine the two modes of behavior if we wish to reduce conflicts. In romantic matters of the heart, the heart should be given considerable value, as we are deeply satisfied when we follow it; but we should not give the heart exclusive power over the head, as we also wish to live well and have a stable, satisfying future. Although there are many romantic circumstances in which acting foolishly can lead to a commendable outcome, there are other romantic circumstances in which acting wisely is essential. The belief that love and wisdom are incompatible is a myth, but if taken with some reservations, it can be a beneficial myth.

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