

SAMANTHA'S THOUGHTS

The ancient Greeks were clever with their words!



We believe we are a pretty sophisticated civilisation with our words. We believe we can use words to describe adequately or talk about anything we want to discuss. After all that's what we have our "communication experts" there to do for us. But what about on the personal level as well as the public level of word usage?

So why is the word "love" such a perplexing word... such a confusing concept... such a divisive topic ... that we need to use endless other words to try to explain what we mean: then often, creating more dilemmas and confusion as to meaning?

Why do we have views about gender that are based solely (or at least predominantly) on concepts or religious/theological beliefs derived from anatomy as the defining framework as to what it means to be human? And the anatomical understanding is wrong?

Why do we criticise divorce rates when we mythologise marriage (especially for girls) from an early age and teach neither boys nor girls anything about relationships?

Why do we find that we have to explain that sex and love are not the same? To explain that sex and intimacy are not the same. To explain that sex is not the sum total of a relationship.

So, in what way were the Greeks so clever?

They had different words for the different aspects of "love" ...

- éros (sexual passion)
- agápe (unconditional love for everyone)
- philia (deep friendship – shared goodwill)
- storgē (familiar love)
- ludus (playful love)
- pragma (longstanding enduring love)
- philautia (love of self)
- mania (obsessive love).

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So, did this catalogue of words sort it all out for the Greek peoples. Some might suggest that it did, others would suggest that it didn't. It very much depends on whose story line you are reading/listening to and the context within which they are writing/sharing their views.

Today, Eros (*the Greek god of love and fertility*) is probably the closed word akin to our generalised usage of the word "love".

If that remains the total of our understanding of the word, then we are rarely likely to move out of the chemistry laboratory of hormones and warm psychological feelings between people. Our understanding of love is heavily diminished and quite vapid for a full understanding of relationships.

Relationships require many other aspects of love as well. That however does not mean that éros should be ignore, diminished or downplayed. In fact, the physical must be enhanced and sustained because that's the mechanism through which we fundamentally relate to each other.

Of course, despite the intervening Roman period after the Greek period, Christianity messed up all of it even further. As Voltaire (1694-1778) said: "God created sex. Priests created marriage."

Reputedly he went on to admonish the priests and the French King for making a great mess of it all. There hasn't been much, if any, improvement over more than two centuries since then.

The "rebellious" flower power and free love period of the 1960s simply highlighted the struggles of people to come to grips with their body and the hormones coursing through their veins.

It's no different for youth today who are trying to come to a realistic understanding of their body in the context of multiple elements of society and countless laws and rules that are stiflingly inhibiting of what they want to do or in fact do with whom, when, where, how and why.

Parents are often no more informed about the human body, sex and/or relationships than many younger people. Often there is very little learning from past experiences and simply a setup of artificial boundaries that are based more on prejudices (*intended to*

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protect) than on informed and robust information.

Too often many parents would prefer to say what some parents are known to have said to their children when the child asked about sex: *"Oh! Don't worry about all that. You'll learn about all that when you get married."*

By then it's too late to realistically learn anything that's of much or any benefit.

And too often, that is what is said, implied or practiced because the parent(s) wouldn't be able to start discussing any of it with their child or in blended families.

There is no intended suggestion that any of the words and thoughts expressed in these articles or books will solve everything or anything for anyone. It's more complex than that and everyone is different in every possible way. Every situation/envirom is different.

What does love mean to you and for you? Are you still struggling yourself or with a partner in the chemistry laboratory of life or have you (both) evolved into a fuller relationship? How do you sustain that relationship to the fullest?

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