

In a Word

Intimacy and independence
- Robert Stirnberg

1

Intimate Committed Passionate
in up to six combinations

styles of stories about
feelings for attitudes toward
typologies taxonomies

biological maneuvers
evolutionary outcomes

Love by the numbers, any combination
from none to three by the power of two
from zed to the infinite tetragrammaton

a universe of two times two times two
an octave too high or too to be heard
even by those with ears to hear

2

eros/amor quest for the beloved
image the lover has in mind embodied

orexis/appetitus a moving toward
a compulsion a craving to have and to hold

hedone/voluptas sensual pleasure
for better or worse the opposite of pain

epithymia pangs of desire
hunger lust *concupiscentia*

mania/insania obsession
jealousy possession by imbecile demons

pleonexia/cupiditas
a clinging to recreating the mundane

philos/amicitia affection
fellowship, a lasting bond of trust

agape/caritas feeling love
without expecting reciprocity

pothos/desiderium a fond
regret a yearning after a longing for

storge/dilectio natural delight

in kindred and spousal companions

eleos/misericordia

loving-kindness mercy in action

pragma/pragmatica taking to heart

the loved one's cultural situation

eusebeia/pietas awe

reverence service to the divine

anamchara/psykikos philos

a breathing as one, a nearness of minds

loid/ludus a playful lightheartedness

lovers might well adopt to their greater joy

3

According to the *Nicomachean Ethics*

there are four main categories

our psychosocial scientists call

Attachment Love, Compassionate Love,

Companionate Love and Romantic Love

and a fifth for good measure — Self Love,

philautia, which runs the ethical gamut

from self-respect and self-esteem to *hubris*

epitomized by the infatuated boy

who fell in love with his own reflection in water.

4

One will get you two, two three,

three five

climbing the holy teractys

of Pythagoras,

reality a pyramid scheme

a numbers game

played on fractions of a horsehair cord

stretched taut

across a cavernous pit empty as the one

where the heart beats

between two slowly turning poles

twisted into

two matching but slightly smaller holes

precisely tuned

by sensitive fastidious adepts

intoning

deep in their bowels the *danse macabre* of the spheres

well-trained

to wear white and keep their mouths shut

in order

to memorize by rote and memorialize

past lives

from godlike beings to soup beans

immortalized
by a string of strictly rational numbers