



Love and Friendship

Allan Bloom

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The author of the national bestseller *The Closing of the American Mind* offers a provocative indictment of the devaluing of love and intimacy in today's culture. Allan Bloom explores the language of love from the Bible to Freud, shedding penetrating light on the true nature of our most basic human connections. "(A) rich mine of a book".--New York Daily News.

Love and Friendship Details

Date : Published May 19th 1994 by Simon & Schuster (first published January 1st 1993)

ISBN : 9780671891206

Author : Allan Bloom

Format : Paperback 592 pages

Genre : Philosophy, Nonfiction, Psychology, Writing, Essays

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From Reader Review Love and Friendship for online ebook

Russel Henderson says

I enjoyed much of the book. Bloom's discussion of Rousseau shined, as he distilled from Emile Rousseau's appreciation of love and of eros as a completion of character. Likewise his survey of Stendhal, Flaubert, Austen and Tolstoy and their esteem of love and eros as described by Rousseau was superb, long enough to be insightful but measured enough to avoid tedium. His survey of Shakespeare, however, seemed forced. Certainly his erudition speaks for itself, but outside of Romeo and Juliet and parts of the chapter on Troilus and Cressida it seemed a digression from his wider themes, and he referenced some of the plays little if at all elsewhere in the book. His discussion of the Greeks, particularly Socrates and Aristophanes, shined, though his depiction of Socrates comes across as rather contemptible despite what I assume was his contrary intention. On the whole an enjoyable, challenging book, though not necessarily a coherent whole.

Bekah Puddington says

Confession/note: This ended up being another one of those books that I didn't read all the way; in fact, I ended up not reading much of it at all, other than the Introduction ("The Fall of Eros"), which just as fittingly could've been titled "A Reason for Books." Those parts elaborating on the good reasons to read literature I found quite compelling - enough so to send me back to the actual story books themselves, and to leave this hefty tome to other readers more scholarly and ambitious than myself.

(For my own purposes, I just don't have time for this work, though I admire its premise - One last note: I personally also find A. Bloom's writing style laborious to work through.)

George Jensen says

Based on the lives and writings of the ancient authors who influenced our modern times. You can get it as a used book from half.com.

Page 30: Bloom sums up his greater need to write on such a theme:

"But nowhere is this a more urgent task than in matters of eros, the first and best hope of human connectedness in a world where all connectedness has become problematic."

Page 29

"I suggest that we need a generation or two not of theory but of an attempt to discover the real phenomena of eros."

Page 33

"I have no desire ... to preach a high-minded and merely edifying version of love."

*"I simply try to act as an honest broker for greater persons and writers than I am ... I present no theory, nor do I have one ... I have constructed no Schema ... in terms of the struggle between **Eros** and agape and the futility of the former in the face of the latter. I have no aspirations, hoping only to show you what some great*

writers thought these things are."

Page 34 On the Romantic movement:

"It tried to rescue sex from Christian original sin and to recover the union of body and soule of Platonic eros while guaranteeing the reciprocity missing from the Platonic understanding of love and friendship..."

"...Rousseau and the Rousseauans play a double role in this book."

Page 34 On the Shakespearean movement:

"Shakespeare is to me the purest voice of nature, and he does no meddle with nature. His plays provide us with the greatest variety of erotic expression, and with Shakespeare eros is the proper term to use."

"He takes lovers with the utmost seriousness and portrays with sympathy love's promise of unity... -and that Christianity is the source not only of repression decried since the Romantics, but of a deepening of women and a new sensitivity of men."

John Warner says

Allan Bloom, with his characteristic combination of brilliance and bombast, laments the death of Eros in the modern world. The culprits are the familiar Straussian bugaboos: a reductionist and materialistic modern science, a relativistic moral climate, and a repulsive consumer culture combine to narrow contemporary man's erotic horizons, and leave him unable to come to grips with the hopes and fears of true intimacy.

Bloom seeks to restore his reader to erotic health by returning to philosophy and literature--the true teachers and knowers of love--and, to that end, offers a set of interpretive essays that vary considerably in their substance and quality. Highlights include a lovely comparative treatment of Montaigne and Shakespeare on friendship, a wonderful commentary on Rousseau's Emile, and a splendid essay on Plato's Symposium. Essays on Tolstoy and Austen, however, are less helpful.

Love and Friendship is Bloom at his best and his worst. The argumentation is often elliptical, assertoric, tortured, sanctimonious--in short, infuriating. But if Bloom is irritating, he is also indispensable. This book shows why.

DoctorM says

A series of essays on the meaning of Love and (to a lesser degree) Friendship, with Bloom arguing in favour of an Eros that leads lovers and friends to aspire to things higher than themselves and outside themselves. The bridging between individual essays doesn't always work, and the essay on Shakespeare could probably have been left out altogether. Nonetheless... Bloom's writing is elegant and gently provocative, and the essays on Austen and Plato's "Symposium" are wonderfully done. Bloom reminds us that Eros is something that includes, but goes beyond, physical desire, and he reminds us that friendship--- in the sense that Plato would've understood ---is a thing to be valued not as a pale shadow of romance but an alliance that responds to the best in each friend. (Bloom is worth reading here in tandem with Alan Bray's "The Friend") We do live in an age when Eros has been devalued, when both love and friendship are no longer seen as calls to be better than we ordinarily are, and Bloom reminds us that there are other, better ways to love.

Max Lewy says

Makes erudition into an art form.

Daniel says

A fascinating look at the idea of Eros in the classic writings of Renee Descartes, William Shakespeare, and others. Beautiful book.

Brian says

Bloom sure read a lot, and he sure put a lot of thought into what he read. This book is extremely dense, not with theory but with observation, context, cross-reference, personal interpretation, and projection. He has strong opinions and, maybe a little bit forced, finds support in the great books. I don't mark up my books much anymore, but this one is full of notes, underlines, paraphrase notes and questions, as well as points of reference to my own life and ideas. The long chapters on Rousseau and Plato are very good, especially Plato. Although Bloom was homosexual, and most of what Plato was discussing was related to man-love, many of the observations and ideas relate to any two people in love: beauty, submission of self, virtue, commitment. Also recommend the chapters on Antony and Cleopatra, Romeo and Juliet, and Madame Bovary.

Saul Bellow's Ravelstein is a novelized account of the last days of his friend, Allan Bloom, and a very moving story that contains a lot of the same virtues Love and Friendship extols. I recommend that one, too.
