

THE FIRE THAT KNOWS

Aphorisms on Love as the Substance of the World

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First English Edition

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For all those who dared to love.

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PROLOGUE

Before the Word

i.

Everything that has ever been said about love is both true and false. True because it comes from experience. False because no experience of love resembles another.

ii.

This book does not wish to explain love. The word comes after the thing, never before it. It only wishes to point — here and there, with one finger — to the place where the thing happened.

iii.

There are silences from which you can no longer emerge without loving.

iv.

Philosophers made love into a problem. Mystics made it into a path. Poets made it into a language. Only lovers made nothing of it — because they already were what the others were trying to describe.

v.

You begin to write about love the moment you understand you can no longer be silent. You stop writing the moment you understand that words, too, are not enough.

vi.

All books about love are written against the solitude of their author. This one is no exception.

vii.

There is no person who has not loved. There are only people who have not dared to admit it.

viii.

Love is not learned. It is only remembered.

ix.

Everything we call metaphysics is, at its core, a silent form of the erotic.

x.

The deepest truths are best spoken in a whisper. And love is, by far, the deepest truth.

xi.

The one who has truly loved even once knows more about God than all the theologians who have never loved at all.

xii.

The aphorism is the form of language closest to silence. That is why, about love, only in aphorisms can one speak without lying too much.

CHAPTER I

The Two Who Were One

“Everything that is separate longs, from birth, for what it no longer is.”

i.

In the beginning, there were not two. There was only the silence of the One. And the silence of the One, because it was so full, split into two voices that have spoken to each other ever since.

ii.

All love is a memory. You do not remember how you met that woman; you remember how you knew her — long ago, before you ever knew her at all.

iii.

Shiva gazes. Shakti dances. Love is the moment when the gaze forgets it is not the dance, and the dance forgets it is not the gaze.

iv.

You are not searching for anyone. You are searching for yourself — in someone else. And if, one day, you find someone who was doing the same thing, that is called a meeting.

v.

Hermes said: as above, so below. Add: as the Two are in heaven, so are the two in bed. Add again: as the two are in bed, so will the One be, one day, in the silence that follows.

vi.

Metaphysical solitude cannot be cured. It can only be transformed. Love is the gentlest form of this transformation.

vii.

There is a single word for what a lover does with his beloved and for what God does with the soul that receives Him. That is why languages have as many silences as they have secrets.

viii.

Two never truly meet. Only the One recognizes its face in two mirrors.

ix.

The myth of the androgyne is not a story about the past. It is a description of every evening in which two fall asleep in each other's arms.

x.

Before the Big Bang, there was nothing. Or more precisely: there was a single embrace so tight that nothing could be distinguished from nothing.

xi.

Tantra teaches that when Shiva and Shakti reunite, the world ceases to exist. This is not a metaphor. It is a clinical description of what happens inside the bodies of those in love.

xii.

Polarity is suffering. Reunion is liberation. Between the two there is only one road, and that road is called love.

xiii.

The universe has, in every point of itself, a secret tendency toward coupling. From electrons seeking their

protons to souls seeking their counterpart — everything breathes the same principle.

xiv.

It is no coincidence that in all spiritual traditions the pole of Consciousness is called masculine and the pole of Energy feminine. The universe is built from this fundamental amorous tension.

xv.

The greatest mystics did not deny the body; they understood it. They knew the body is the temple, and the embrace — the ritual.

xvi.

To say: I love you, is, at its deepest, to say: I recognize you. And to recognize means to remember.

xvii.

Hermes Trismegistus: all is One. Tantra: all is Two playing at being One. The mystics: all is One playing at being Two. Love is the game itself.

xviii.

There is no longing without memory. And the longing for someone you have never met is the oldest memory there is.

xix.

Two beings who love each other do not produce a third thing called love. They discover, together, that they have always been one single thing.

xx.

There is an ontological solitude that only love attenuates. Philosophy explains it, religion consoles it, art transforms it. Only love heals it — for a few moments that, nonetheless, change everything.

xxi.

Look at a child before it learns words. There you will see what the One looks like before it unfolds into two.

xxii.

In the Song of Songs, the Bride seeks the Bridegroom through the city. This is not a story about a woman seeking a man. It is a story about a consciousness seeking its other half.

xxiii.

Every culture has a myth of original separation. This is not superstition. It is collective memory.

xxiv.

Aristophanes said, in the Symposium, that people were once spherical, with four arms and four legs. Then the gods cut them in two. Since then we search. This is, in the Greek tongue, what the Indians call smarana — the act of remembering.

xxv.

You are not complete. You never were. And the illusion that you could be complete alone is the oldest spiritual illness there is.

xxvi.

Hermes: the Two are the manifestation of the Third, which is the Mystery itself. Love is this Mystery made visible for a moment.

xxvii.

The return to the One is not the end of love. It is its fulfillment. Only there, in the rediscovered identity, does longing finally cease.

xxviii.

*Tell me whom you love, and I will tell you which part of
yourself you forgot long ago.*

