

# **The Narrow Plank: Rosenzweig and Kierkegaard on the Possibility of Romantic Love**

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## **Abstract:**

Soren Kierkegaard and Franz Rosenzweig have opposite reputations in terms of their perspectives on romantic love: Kierkegaard is the pessimist who rejects it as empty and unethical, and Rosenzweig is the optimist who celebrates it as homologous with divine love. Upon closer examination, however, we see that Kierkegaard and Rosenzweig actually struggle with some of the same doubts and uncertainties about romantic love—and Rosenzweig apparently cannot resolve all of them. This constructed dialogue between them suggests that their views are not as disparate as they may seem. Furthermore, according to Krishek’s interpretation of Kierkegaard and my interpretation of Rosenzweig, these two thinkers have remarkably similar visions for an enduring romantic relationship in light of romantic love’s fragility and ephemerality.

Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) and Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) both wrote thoughtfully and extensively about the issue of romantic love.<sup>1</sup> According to their reputations, they hold diametrically opposed views on this topic. Kierkegaard is the solitary proto-existentialist philosopher, forever heartbroken after sabotaging his own

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<sup>1</sup> I use the expression “romantic love” loosely in this paper in order to refer to a feeling or bond between individuals that has erotic aspects. I employ the term romantic love in a twofold manner: First, it may refer to the (inter)subjective, emotional experience of love at a single moment between individuals. Second, it may refer to the love that presumably underlies and animates a sustained romantic relationship over time. At times, for the sake of clarity, I refer to this latter dimension specifically as “enduring romantic love.” The dynamic between these two aspects of romantic love proves to be central in both Kierkegaard’s and Rosenzweig’s discussions. It is also important to note that in this paper, “romantic love” refers only to love between human beings, for neither Kierkegaard nor Rosenzweig subscribe to the idea that the love between God and humans is erotic or romantic, although Rosenzweig does regard human romantic love as homologous with divine love, as we shall see.

betrothal,<sup>2</sup> who bitterly rejects the validity of romantic love. In contrast, Rosenzweig is the young philosopher of dialogue who, while down in the nightmarish trenches of the first world war, dreams up his theology in which romantic love figures as the foundation of divine revelation. Whereas scholars such as MacIntyre, Mackey, Adorno and Buber cast Kierkegaard as an anti-social philosopher, concerned only with “the single individual,”<sup>3</sup> Rosenzweig is commonly recognized as a dialogical theologian who praises the power of friendship and romance.

Of course, any reputation—any terse summary of a human individual—inevitably involves reductionism and combines both fact and fantasy. To be sure, Kierkegaard writes more pessimistically about romantic love than Rosenzweig does, and these two thinkers draw starkly different conclusions with regard to its definition and value.

However, as we shall see in Part One of this paper, they both wrestle with some of the same questions and doubts about the possibility of romantic love. Each struggles with how romantic love could be both spontaneous and enduring; how the “preferential” aspect of romantic love might be ethically and religiously problematic; and how romantic love, which thrives on freedom, could possibly involve duty or commandment.

Kierkegaard addresses these questions in his writings and launches acerbic attacks from those grounds. Rosenzweig’s ruminations on the topic are a bit subtler. As he affirms the ontological and theological gravity of romantic love, he defends its validity against

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<sup>2</sup> For Kierkegaard’s personal account of his failed engagement to Regina Olson, see his journal entry of August 24, 1849 in *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, ed. Robert Bretall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 14-18.

<sup>3</sup> See Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1984); Louis Mackey, “The Loss of the World in Kierkegaard’s Ethics,” *Points of View: Readings of Kierkegaard* (Tallahassee: Florida State Press, 1986); Theodor W. Adorno, “On Kierkegaard’s Doctrine of Love,” *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* 8: 413-429; Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*, trans. R. Gregor-Smith (London: Routledge Classics, 2004).

Kierkegaardian blows. A closer analysis reveals, however, that while Rosenzweig appreciates the power of romantic love, he also recognizes its potential fickleness and fragility in the flow of time. In order to rescue the possibility of long-term romantic love, he turns to the “not-yet”<sup>4</sup> of Redemption. This turn betrays Rosenzweig’s own uncertainties about romantic love, albeit in his efforts to dispel them, and we shall see that his perspective is not as diametrically opposed to Kierkegaard’s as we might have expected. Moreover, in the light of Sharon Krishek’s recent study of Kierkegaard,<sup>5</sup> it appears that there are stronger correlations between Rosenzweig and Kierkegaard with respect to their visions of enduring romantic love than we may have dreamed of. We shall examine these in Part Two of this paper.

I do not wish to suggest that Rosenzweig systematically or even consciously responds to Kierkegaard’s arguments about romantic love. Although this is conceivable insofar as he takes Kierkegaard’s writings seriously and even situates his own “new thinking” in relation to Kierkegaard’s rejection of Hegel,<sup>6</sup> this is not my point. Rather, I contend that a constructed “dialogue” between Kierkegaard and Rosenzweig on the topic of romantic love sheds light on their respective philosophies and theologies, as well as on the central questions and uncertainties about romantic love that they share.

Despite the fact that both Kierkegaard and Rosenzweig devote much ink to the issue of romantic love, few scholars have seriously examined or sought philosophical insight from their perspectives on this matter. With regard to Kierkegaard, Krishek

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<sup>4</sup> Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. William W. Hallo (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), 250.

<sup>5</sup> See Sharon Krishek, *Kierkegaard on Faith and Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Rosenzweig praises Kierkegaard for shifting attention away from the cognitive All and, rather, to the particular human individual, “saddled with first and last name.” See Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 7.

suggests two reasons for this. First, much of Kierkegaard's discourse on romantic love is written under pseudonyms, so it is often difficult to clearly discern his personal views on the topic. Second, he is so commonly regarded as hostile to any form of preferential love that few scholars have thought to inquire deeply into his points about romantic love.<sup>7</sup>

Although some recent scholars have argued that Kierkegaard actually does have important ethical points to make about concrete human relationships, they have hardly investigated his perspective on romantic love in particular.<sup>8</sup>

As for Rosenzweig, virtually all scholars who seriously engage with his theology acknowledge that love is a crucial element in his work. Few, however, have specifically considered his views on romantic love in particular, despite the fact that it is such a salient image in his writings, especially Part II of *The Star of Redemption*. Those who have explored Rosenzweig's perspective on romantic love have done so primarily in order to show how it functions hermeneutically or how sensual love relates to divine love in his theology.<sup>9</sup> While such analyses are indispensable for understanding Rosenzweig's thought and do clarify the role of romantic love in his theology, they do not necessarily elucidate Rosenzweig's perspective on romantic love in the context of life itself—the

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<sup>7</sup> See Krishek, 1-4.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Stephen C. Evans, *Passionate Reason: Making Sense of Kierkegaard's Philosophical Fragments* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); Jamie M. Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving: A Commentary on Kierkegaard's Works of Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); George Pattison, *Kierkegaard, Religion and the Nineteenth-Century Crisis of Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). In her book, *Kierkegaard and the Treachery of Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) Amy Laura Hall does specifically investigate Kierkegaard's views on romantic love, but she concludes that he does not have anything truly constructive to say about romantic relationships, as the title of her book suggests.

<sup>9</sup> See Yudit Kornberg Greenberg, *Better than Wine: Love, Poetry, and Prayer in the Thought of Franz Rosenzweig* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996). Cf. Paul Mendes-Flohr, "Between Sensual and Heavenly Love: Franz Rosenzweig's Reading of the Song of Songs," *Scriptural Exegesis: The Shapes of Culture and the Religious Imagination: Essays in Honour of Michael Fishbane*, ed. Deborah A. Green and Laura S. Lieber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 310-318.

meaning, value and subjective experience of it in the moment, how romantic relationships may endure over time, and so on. There are two main reasons for this gap in the literature. First, there has been a general preference among scholars to focus more on Rosenzweig's philosophy, as opposed to his theology.<sup>10</sup> Second, while Rosenzweig quite extensively discusses romantic love as it occurs within a single moment (mostly in Part II of *The Star*), he generally falls silent with regard to how, exactly, romantic relationships actually function in life, let alone in the Kingdom of Redemption. As a result, it is difficult to discern his sense of the ideal form of romantic love.

One who considers the earthly intricacies of romantic love to be irrelevant for philosophy or theology might dismiss such an inquiry altogether. However, Rosenzweig clearly states that one cannot understand revelation without understanding sensual love.

In his introduction to his commentary on the Song of Songs, he writes:

The analogue of love permeates as analogue all of revelation...But it is precisely meant to be more than analogy. And this it can be only when it appears without a "this means," without pointing, that is, to that of which it is supposed to be the analogy. Thus it is not enough that God's relationship to man is explained by the simile of the lover and the beloved. God's word must contain the relationship of lover to beloved directly, the significant, that is, without any pointing to the significate.<sup>11</sup>

Romantic love is not merely a metaphor for divine love; it is homologous with divine love. While this does not mean that the two are identical,<sup>12</sup> it does mean that Rosenzweig's understanding of romantic love is intimately intertwined with his theology as a whole. Indeed, in the period when he wrote the section on Revelation in the *The Star*, he wrote to his lover that it was an expression of their romance: "Part II, book II is so

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<sup>10</sup> Paul Mendes-Flohr brought this fact to my attention, as it influenced his decision to teach our seminar at the University of Chicago on "The Theological Writings of Franz Rosenzweig."

<sup>11</sup> Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 199.

<sup>12</sup> See Mendes-Flohr, "Between Sensual and Heavenly Love," 317 n. 12.

beautiful...in a way, you already know it, of course, that just as much of you as of me is in it.”<sup>13</sup> To understand Rosenzweig’s theology, it is necessary to clarify his perspective on romantic love itself.

## I. DIFFERENT RESPONSES TO THE SIMILAR STRUGGLES

In the second volume of *Either/Or*, Judge William points out a perilous paradox in the Aesthete’s view of romantic love. On one hand, the Judge observes, this lover believes that romantic love is by nature “immediate” and spontaneous—one falls for another because she is beautiful, because her voice moves him, because of who she is. On the other hand, this lover imagines that his love is whole and eternal. These two assumptions about romantic love are contradictory. The Judge concludes, “The lovers are sincerely convinced that their relationship is in itself a complete whole which never can be altered. But since this assurance is founded only upon a natural determinant, the eternal is thus based upon the temporal and thereby cancels itself.”<sup>14</sup> Therefore, according to the Judge, the Aesthete’s love is immoral, for true morality must be rooted in eternity and yet such romantic love is trapped in fleeting sensuality.<sup>15</sup>

Kierkegaard reinforces this criticism in *Works of Love*. He writes about the Poet’s titillating sense of romantic love that is verily no more than hot air, so to speak: “Behold, passion inflames, worldly sagacity cools, but neither this heat nor this cold nor the blending of the his heat and this cold is the pure air of the eternal.”<sup>16</sup> With his gorgeous beloved in his arms, the Poet may fancy that eternity permeates this very moment, but

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<sup>13</sup> As quoted in Greenberg, *Better than Wine*, 97 n. 49.

<sup>14</sup> Kierkegaard, “Either/Or” in *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, op cit., 83.

<sup>15</sup> Kierkegaard, “Either/Or,” *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, 83.

<sup>16</sup> Soren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 56.

Kierkegaard laments, “only this one time of erotic love is genuine love, is everything, and the next time nothing.”<sup>17</sup> Kierkegaard concludes that romantic love is only meaningful in the present moment, and therefore it has no real validity.

Rosenzweig, in contrast, asserts that love *must*, by definition, be a purely present phenomenon. Of course relationships of love take place in space and time, but the element of love itself—whether the lover is God or a human being—is only active in the evanescent present, here and now. Rosenzweig unequivocally and unapologetically emphasizes that it can only be “ever young love, ever first love. For love alone is at once such fateful domination over the heart in which it stirs, and yet so newborn, initially so without a past, so wholly sprung from the moment which it fulfills, and only from that moment.”<sup>18</sup> If love lacks eternity, then so be it—it is nonetheless love in the moment! Leora Batnitzky explains, “Love, for Rosenzweig, is always fleeting. Such is the deficiency of love between two people: while it is always renewed, it is also always gone. This problem is not love’s, but time’s itself.”<sup>19</sup> Rising and falling constantly in the ever disappearing Now, love is fundamentally evanescent.

For Kierkegaard, the potential dissipation of love over time implies that it is meaningless. But Rosenzweig holds that speculations about the future already involve a departure from love itself, which is “present, pure and simple: how should love itself know whether it will love, whether, indeed, it has loved? It is enough that it knows this

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<sup>17</sup> Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 62. In *Either/Or*, the Seducer even openly admits, “The moment is everything, and in the moment, woman is everything; the consequences I do not understand” (Kierkegaard, “Either/Or,” *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, 76).

<sup>18</sup> Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 160.

<sup>19</sup> Leora Batnitzky, *Idolatry and Representation: The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig Reconsidered* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 117.

one thing: it loves.”<sup>20</sup> Love is purely present and thus absolutely unpredictable. Since it has no past and no future, love is essentially beyond the horizons of thought and language, and the only true statement one can honestly say about it is “Love is strong as death” (Song of Songs 8:6),<sup>21</sup> for only this can capture love’s radical presentness. In stark contrast to Kierkegaard, who philosophically scrutinizes love from a distance, Rosenzweig writes to his recent fiancée, “Do you know why you were unable at that time to know ‘the meaning of love’? Because one only knows it when one both loves and is loved.”<sup>22</sup>

In his insistence that love is purely present, without past or future, Rosenzweig defends romantic love against Kierkegaard’s criticism that it lacks wholeness and eternity. However, this is obviously unsatisfying for anyone who wishes to learn about Rosenzweig’s views about the possibility of enduring romantic love. At this point in our analysis, it seems that he merely affirms and casts a positive (even divine) light on the momentary love that Kierkegaard rejects. But this alone would be a weak defense.

In truth, Rosenzweig acknowledges the fragility and mutability of human love. In the case of divine love, constancy is always possible. Once the human soul has attained faithfulness through the rigid defiance of the self, it receives God’s love in “serene duration” and “knows itself loved for ‘ever.’”<sup>23</sup> Although God’s undying love is essentially a continual strobe of love in ever renewing presents, the beloved soul

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<sup>20</sup> Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 164.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 202, 156-157.

<sup>22</sup> Franz Rosenzweig’s letter to Edith Hahn of January 16, 1920, in Rosenzweig, *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought*, ed. Nahum Glatzer (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998), 90.

<sup>23</sup> See Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 169-171.

perceives it as a continuous flow.<sup>24</sup> But this is not the case between human lovers, whose “roles of giver and receiver of love pass back and forth.”<sup>25</sup> The human individual who has received God’s love is naturally compelled to channel that love toward a human other—but loving proves to be deeply complicated. “It is difficult to love,” Rosenzweig reflects in the afterglow of a Yehuda Halevi poem, “due to the tension between man’s infinite desire to love, his compulsion to love, and his finite ability to do so.”<sup>26</sup> The defiance of the self that was necessary in order to endow the soul with faithfulness for divine love causes the self to turn inwards, and through this hard shell of the self, one cannot fully encounter the Other. One had to close herself off to the “outside” world in order to encounter God in her soul—“There is no bright revelation without the somber occlusion of the self, no faithfulness without defiance”<sup>27</sup>—but now she yearns to open up again in order to reach across the abyss between two secluded souls. But her love is wrapped in soulful inwardness, unable to break out into the space-time of the world. Moreover, there is the grave problem of love’s absolute presentness, which makes it terrifyingly unpredictable. In reference to the longing lovers of the Song of Songs, Rosenzweig writes:

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<sup>24</sup> This imagery is interestingly reminiscent of Maimonides’ description of divine revelation. God reveals the “great secrets...like someone in a very dark night over whom lightning flashes time and time again. Among us there is one for whom the lightning flashes time and time again, so that he is always, as it were, in unceasing light. Thus night appears to him as day” [Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 7]. This “one” who receives God’s flashes so constantly that they appear as continuous light is Moses. Both Maimonides and Rosenzweig imagine a God who “strokes” the content of revelation, if you will, and a human receiver who perceives the discontinuous revelation as continuous. For Maimonides, this content of revelation is knowledge, and Moses is the only one who receives seemingly continuously; for Rosenzweig, the content is love, and every human soul has the capacity to receive seemingly continuously.

<sup>25</sup> Rosenzweig, *Star of Redemption*, 169.

<sup>26</sup> Franz Rosenzweig, *Ninety-Two Poems and Hymns of Yehuda Halevi*, trans. Thomas Kovach, Eva Jospe, and Gilya Gerda Schmidt, ed. Richard A. Cohen (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), 25.

<sup>27</sup> Rosenzweig, *Star of Redemption*, 170.

They yearn for a love eternal such as can never spring from the everlasting presentness of sensation...The beloved pleads with the lover to sunder the heavens of his everlasting presentness which defies her yearning for love eternal, and to descend to her, so that she might set herself like an eternal seal upon his ever-beating heart and like a tightly fitting ring about his never resting arm. Matrimony is not love. Matrimony is infinitely more than love. Matrimony is the external fulfillment which love reaches out after from her internal blissfulness in a stupor of unquenchable longing...<sup>28</sup>

Love is chained to the present, just as Kierkegaard knew it to be. The beloved cannot trust that her lover's feelings will remain the same in the next moment. Their love is human love, and thus it is vulnerable. Both individuals know this to be true. And yet, for Rosenzweig, the desperate sobs of yearning lovers beckon the dawn of Redemption. In this heartfelt desire for true intimacy and connection—not only in each transitory moment, but also in the streaming flow of time—one stretches to the limits of Revelation and catches glimpses of an enduring love, a true “matrimony” which may emerge in a redeemed world.<sup>29</sup>

In this liminal awareness between Revelation and Redemption—between flashes of raw love in the depths of one's soul and waves of embodied love in the density of the world—one begins to understand that love “is only apparently transitory: in truth, it is eternal.”<sup>30</sup> With such an awareness of the possibility of continuity within the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>29</sup> According to this perspective, a wedding in our world is a sort of “pre-enactment” of the matrimony that will emerge in Redemption. The Jewish wedding ritual arguably reflects this view. The couple (and the community as a whole) mourns the fact that this marriage is taking place in a pre-messianic age. The sixth blessing of the traditionally recited “Seven Blessings” echoes Jeremiah's prophecy that *in the future* the joyful voices of bride and groom will again be heard in Jerusalem, and the groom traditionally breaks a glass as a reminder of the destruction of the Temple. One might interpret this emphasis on the lack of Redemption as a call to remember that marriage in our world is fragile, much like the glass itself. I thank Rabbi Lizzi Heydemann for this observation.

<sup>30</sup> Rosenzweig, *Star of Redemption*, 201.

discontinuous strobe of love, one is ripe for the “inner conversion”<sup>31</sup> that enhances one’s capacity for robust, enduring love in the world. For the inner conversion is precisely a letting go into love’s transience and fragility, which paradoxically enables one to fully open himself into partnership and intimacy, into love and life. Once he is exposed to the world, no longer secluded in her own interiority, love can flow freely from him. This everlasting “volition” in his love is neither fateful divine love nor the rigid character of a controlled person.

Rather it appears new to him at every moment, appears at every moment to erupt entirely from out his own interior with all the thrust of directed volition. From out the depths of his own soul, it burst ever anew upon the exterior. It is not fated but borne by volition.<sup>32</sup>

This awakened aptitude to love fully and steadily nourishes a kind of commitment that has nothing to do with control in any way. But its current is nonetheless powerful. For Rosenzweig, this is genuine neighborly love.

“Neighborly love,” however, does not imply that it has nothing to do with romantic love. Remember, this enhanced form of love grows out of the beloved’s yearning for her lover “to descend to her, so that she might set herself like an eternal seal upon his ever-beating heart and like a tightly fitting ring about his never resting arm.”<sup>33</sup> Matrimony. Not all neighborly love is romantic, but there is apparently a romantic form of neighborly love. Yudit Kornberg Greenberg comments that “revelation can be seen as the experience of new love, and redemption as the sealing of love in matrimony.”<sup>34</sup> The romantic form of neighborly love remains unclear to us, even through the end of *The Star*, but Rosenzweig nonetheless invites us to imagine it.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>34</sup> Greenberg, 104.

For Kierkegaard, however, romantic love is antithetical to neighborly love,<sup>35</sup> and here we come to his second major challenge to the validity of romantic love: it is preferential. In *Works of Love*, he sharply differentiates between neighborly love and preferential love and vehemently argues that the former is superior to the latter.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, this is the essence of the Christian teaching, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39).<sup>37</sup>

Christianity has thrust erotic love and friendship from the throne, the love rooted in mood and inclination, preferential love, in order to establish spiritual love in its place, love to one’s neighbour, a love which in all earnestness and truth is inwardly more tender in the union of two persons than erotic love is and more faithful in the sincerity of close relationship than the most famous friendship.<sup>38</sup>

Kierkegaard is so opposed to preferential love that he suggests that one should completely eradicate it from her life. It is not enough to simply say that neighborly love is *relatively* lofty; this is not a sufficiently strong defense of Christian love.

Confusion and bewilderment (which paganism and the poet are opposed to just as much as Christianity is) develops when the defence amounts to this—that Christianity certainly teaches a higher love but *in addition* praises friendship and erotic love. To talk thus is a double betrayal—inasmuch as the speaker has neither the spirit of the poet nor the spirit of Christianity.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Krishek challenges Kierkegaard on this apparent assertion in *Works of Love*, suggesting that it is actually incompatible with his thought in general. We will discuss this in Part Two of this paper.

<sup>36</sup> This contradiction between non-preferential neighborly love and preferential romantic love corresponds to the classical debate between *agape* and *eros*.

<sup>37</sup> Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 34ff. Of course, this is based on a Jewish teaching (Lev. 19:18, 19:34).

<sup>38</sup> Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 58.

<sup>39</sup> Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 59.

The romantic love of the poet threatens to contaminate neighborly love. Some scholars argue that Kierkegaard does not completely reject any sort of friendship or romance,<sup>40</sup> but it is clearly possible to read him in such a way.<sup>41</sup>

Why is Kierkegaard so opposed to preferential love? First of all, he sees it as inherently selfish. If I celebrate my love for a woman because I find her beautiful, fun, wise and so on, then I am essentially celebrating how she makes me feel. Such sensuality goes hand in hand with selfishness. “Christianity has misgivings about erotic love and friendship because preference in passion or passionate preference is really another form of self-love.”<sup>42</sup> In contrast, neighborly love involves renunciation of the self and, insofar as it is radically indiscriminate, it involves a renunciation of the Other as well. “Love of one’s neighbor... is self-renouncing love, and self-renunciation casts out all preferential love just as it casts out all self-love.”<sup>43</sup> Second, Kierkegaard denounces preferential love inasmuch as it is hopelessly ephemeral. Any love that is based on particular aspects of a beloved is bound to collapse; it is only a matter of time. In neighborly love, however, one does not follow his whimsical attractions to conditional characteristics and changeable traits, but she embraces the all-encompassing exhortation to “love thy neighbor.” Whereas preferential love has mere existence, neighborly love has duty, and as a result, neighborly love is stable and continuous: “*only when it is a duty to love, only then is love eternally secure*. The security of the eternal casts out all anxiety and makes the love

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<sup>40</sup> See, for example, George Pattison’s foreword in Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, xi-xiv. Cf. above, footnote 8.

<sup>41</sup> See above, footnote 3.

<sup>42</sup> Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 65.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

perfect, perfectly secure. For in that love which has only existence, however confident it may be, there is still an anxiety, anxiety over the possibility of change.”<sup>44</sup>

For Rosenzweig, however, the preferential nature of romantic love may actually serve as the foundation for an enduring commitment. In *Understanding the Sick and the Healthy*, he describes the cerebral philosopher, on the verge of marriage, who begins to anxiously doubt whether there is actually anything constant or stable in his beloved that he could unconditionally grasp onto. Rosenzweig concludes that the solution to his anxiety is precisely the beloved’s particular individuality.

The lovers dare not deny, not even Romeo and Juliet, that changes, involving both of them, will inevitably take place. Nevertheless they do not hesitate. . . They cling to the unchangeable. What is the unchangeable? Unbiased reflection reveals once more that it is only a name. This act [of addressing the lover by name] stands as a solitary pledge that the yesterdays of the two individuals will be incorporated in their today.<sup>45</sup>

For Rosenzweig, the first and last name of an individual endows her with a very real substantiality that philosophy simply cannot dissolve.<sup>46</sup> He suggests that the lover’s anxiety in relation to his beloved only emerges when he seeks something abstract and transcendent about her. “The lover merely applied the question ‘What actually is it?’ to a human being. The answer he received resulted in the immediate disappearance of two very concrete individuals—the questioner himself and his beloved.”<sup>47</sup> In order to restore his love, this anxious lover must regain common sense and the simple ability to focus on the beloved’s individuality, reflected concretely in her name. A marriage can only last if

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 47. Emphasis in original.

<sup>45</sup> Franz Rosenzweig, *Understanding the Sick and the Healthy: A View of World, Man, and God*, trans. Nahum Glatzer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 49.

<sup>46</sup> In fact, Rosenzweig explicitly associates this very insight with the philosophy of Kierkegaard! See Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 7. Cf. above, footnote 6.

<sup>47</sup> Rosenzweig, *Understanding the Sick and the Healthy*, 52.

both individuals embrace the particularity of the other. Thus, for Rosenzweig, enduring romantic love *must* have preferential aspects.

He does not even admit the possibility of purely non-preferential love. Even with regard to God's gratuitous and fateful love, Rosenzweig declares that "love is no all-love...God's love loves where it loves and whom it loves"<sup>48</sup> If this is true for divine love, then it must be all the more so for human love. To be sure, in the redeemed world, one will love his neighbor—i.e. the individual who is near him—indiscriminately, not "for his beautiful eyes, but only because he just happens to be standing there, because he happens to be nighest to me."<sup>49</sup> At the same time, however, this neighborly love does not cease to be sensuous. One still sees and appreciates those blue eyes, as it were. Contra Kierkegaard, Rosenzweig boldly denies any renunciation of the self or of the Other. Both individuals stand firmly in their own particularities.

Man is not to deny himself. Precisely here in the commandment to love one's neighbor, his self is definitely confirmed in its place. The world is not thrown in his face as an endless melee, nor is he told, while a finger points to the whole melee: that is you. That is you—therefore stop distinguishing yourself from it, penetrate it, dissolve in it, lose yourself in it. No, it is quite different. Out of the endless chaos of the world, one nighest thing, his neighbor, is placed before his soul, and concerning this one and well-nigh only concerning this one he is told: he is like you.<sup>50</sup>

This must be the case, for "Love is not an attribute, but an event."<sup>51</sup> Love has to be sensuous, for it is wholly present and pre-conceptual.<sup>52</sup> If love were to completely surrender its preferential dimension, it would disappear.

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<sup>48</sup> Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 164.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>52</sup> Mendes-Flohr comments, "We love one another as em-bodied in our particularities, and when that love is erotic it *includes* the shape of the other's face, the aroma of the other's skin, the

We see, however, that Rosenzweig's notion of neighborly love is in tension with romantic love. Neighborly love may be preferential in the sense that it is sensually connected to a particular beloved, but it is not preferential to the extent that romantic love must be preferential. Rosenzweig hardly leaves room in *Redemption* for an individual to *choose* a partner out of the crowd, so to speak. How could an enduring romantic relationship work so that it does not defy the ethos of neighborly love? Desire must play a role in romantic love, but Rosenzweig already attempts to extricate desire from love in Part II of *The Star*. "Perhaps want precedes love," he concedes, "But what does love know of that which precedes it?...[T]here is no room for want within love itself, on the narrow plank of its momentariness."<sup>53</sup> Rosenzweig denies that the "attribute" of desire could be an active ingredient in the "event" of love. Rosenzweig cannot completely shed the Kierkegaardian sense that preferential love is problematic. Although Rosenzweig suggests that romantic love will exist and will even be *actualized* in *Redemption*, he does not describe how this will unfold. While he can eloquently articulate his vision of sensual-yet-indiscriminate neighborly love, it appears that the ultimate matrimony—presumably the romantic form of neighborly love—remains unimaginable for him. Matrimony is the essence of *Redemption*—we are just not told *how*, exactly.

Kierkegaard's third main argument against the validity of romantic love pertains to the issue of freedom. The Seducer of *Either/Or* even goes so far as to intentionally embolden Cordelia so that he may take her in freedom. "She must owe me nothing, for she must be free; love exists only in freedom, only in freedom is there enjoyment and

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quality of her or his voice. Love is perforce sensuous – and *ergo* as strong as death" (Mendes-Flohr, "Between Sensual and Heavenly Love," 315).

<sup>53</sup> Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 163.

everlasting delight.”<sup>54</sup> For precisely this reason, the Aesthete does not believe in marriage, for such an institution strips lovers of their abilities to embrace one another freely. The Seducer says to Cordelia, “Our external union is only a separation.”<sup>55</sup> Marriage introduces rules, boundaries and duties—elements that could only spoil aesthetic love. A married couple simply cannot get around the fact that their relationship is contractual, and this necessarily adulterates love.

In *Works of Love*, however, Kierkegaard rejects the notion that there is even freedom in aesthetic love. He temporarily concedes, “The poet idolises the inclinations and is therefore quite right—since he always has only erotic love in mind—in saying that to command love is the greatest foolishness and the most preposterous kind of talk.”<sup>56</sup> The Poet *must* reject any command. He has no other choice, for he is enslaved to his own romantic restlessness. When he loses interest in his beloved (which will inevitably happen), he is then *obligated* to leave her and search for another lover—and another, and another. His thirst for romantic partners can never be quenched, so he is always on the move, like him “who strolls here and there, an armed highway man who turns in wherever twilight finds him.”<sup>57</sup> His love is mere *existence*, and thus he cannot escape the “anxiety over the possibility of change.”<sup>58</sup> As an antidote to such illusory love, Kierkegaard affirms that the duty to “love thy neighbor” provides a freedom that the

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<sup>54</sup> Kierkegaard, “Either/Or,” *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, 57, cf. 63-64.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>56</sup> Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 63.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 47. A legitimate objection to Kierkegaard’s portrait of the Poet lies in the possibility that the Poet is actually happy in his continual promiscuity. What if the poet does not actually feel “anxiety” over his endless escapades and his wanderings from partner to partner? What if that erotic transience brings him joy? What if he does not feel a need for “eternity” in his love life? Does he not, then, actually attain freedom? Kierkegaard does not sufficiently address this challenge to his case against aesthetic love.

Aesthete could never feel. The “duty” to love is only an “apparent contradiction.”<sup>59</sup> In fact, “*Only when it is a duty to love, only then is love made eternally free in blessed independence.*”<sup>60</sup> Whereas the Poet always feels a need to “possess” his beloved, the Christian carries the duty to love in his heart and thus rests assured that he can love anyone, anywhere. Therefore, “duty alone makes for genuine freedom. Spontaneous love makes a man free and in the next moment dependent.”<sup>61</sup>

For Rosenzweig, however, love is both spontaneous *and* free. Even the most reliable, continual love emerges anew in each present moment. Again, the lovers in the Song of Songs know and fear this truth. “The beloved pleads with the lover to sunder the heavens of his everlasting presentness which defies her yearning for love eternal, and to descend to her, so that she might set herself like an eternal seal upon his ever-beating heart and like a tightly fitting ring about his never resting arm.”<sup>62</sup> The beloved knows that no promise, law or duty could possibly save her from this dreadful prospect of abandonment, for love knows nothing of such arbitrary constructions. But, according to Rosenzweig, the lover may be commanded, for this comes directly from God, the Lover of all lovers.

Yes of course, love cannot be commanded. No third party can command it or extort it. No third party can, but the One can. The commandment to love can only proceed from the mouth of the lover. Only the lover can and does say: love me!— and he really does so. In his mouth the commandment to love is not a strange commandment; it is none other than the voice of love itself.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 52. Emphasis in original.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>62</sup> Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 204. Cf. above, p. 9.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 176.

By “strange commandment,” Rosenzweig implies that the commandment is so deeply ingrained in the individual that she acts virtually autonomously.<sup>64</sup> God’s primordial command, mediated only by love itself on its way to the human soul, sets into motion a river of love that will ultimately flow into an ocean of limitless interpersonal love. For Rosenzweig, “commandment” (*Gebot*) is not the same as “law” (*Gesetz*). Whereas a law is legislated in the past and implemented in the future, a commandment is revealed through love and is therefore wholly in the present.<sup>65</sup> Thus one does not “obey” a commandment, *per se*; one effortlessly “fulfills” it in the wake of God’s love.<sup>66</sup> Thus, in order for freedom and continuity to paradoxically coexist in love, Rosenzweig conceives of the command to love as a “directed freedom.”<sup>67</sup> Through the powerful current of divine love, true matrimony may someday be a reality in the Kingdom. However, Rosenzweig does not tell us exactly what this means realistically in the context of human relationships.

Kierkegaard and Rosenzweig evidently face some of the same questions about romantic love. Rosenzweig seems to regard them as challenges that lovers can potentially overcome, yet he does not clearly describe what such a redeemed romantic relationship would look like. It is worthwhile for us, therefore, to attempt to infer what Rosenzweig envisions, and this shall constitute the next part of our study. Krishek has engaged in a similar inquiry in relation to Kierkegaard, and we shall see that a dialogue between her project and ours reveals even more illuminating correlations between Kierkegaard and Rosenzweig.

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<sup>64</sup> See *ibid.*, 214. Of course, one notices here the influence of Kant on Rosenzweig.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 177. Cf. Franz Rosenzweig, *On Jewish Learning*, ed. Nahum Glatzer (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1955), 109-118.

<sup>66</sup> Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 215.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

## II. ENVISIONING THE IDEAL FORM OF ROMANTIC LOVE IN ROSENZWEIG AND KIERKEGAARD

Before we begin, we must acknowledge that Rosenzweig does not necessarily believe that a perfectly enduring romantic love is possible in our unredeemed world. For him, true matrimony is a vision of eschatological proportions. It will be manifest in the Kingdom, but it may not be possible here. That said, Rosenzweig clearly states that Redemption is merely a “not-yet,”<sup>68</sup> and human activity plays an indispensable role in hastening its arrival, “knocking on the locked door of the future.”<sup>69</sup> And what is this human action that invites redemption? It is acts of love that maximally approximate the not-yet love of the Kingdom. And, of all earthly forms of human relationship, “the great simile of marriage...is highest redemption among them.”<sup>70</sup> Therefore, it is of utmost importance, according to Rosenzweig’s eschatology, for us to discern what it means and entails to establish an ideal marriage. Even if romantic love as we know it will ultimately melt into a purely non-preferential neighborly love in Redemption, it is nonetheless crucial for us to elucidate Rosenzweig’s vision of the “marriage which is highest redemption.”

In order to discern Rosenzweig’s vision of matrimony, we must recall his understanding of the unredeemed romantic relationship. As we have already noted,<sup>71</sup> these individuals remain secluded from one another because they are encased within their own depths. The personal inwardness necessary to receive divine love creates a condition in which even lovers who hold one another in erotic embraces feel alienated and alone.

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<sup>68</sup> Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 250.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

<sup>71</sup> See above, pp. 8-9.

They cannot reach across the abyss that separates secluded selves. Furthermore, there is the problem of love's absolute presentness. The lovers are tragically aware of the fact that their feelings are chained to disappearing moments; one cannot be certain that the love will remain. While this anxiety beckons the dawn of Redemption, it also inevitably prevents the lovers from feeling secure in their relationship.

Rosenzweig's discussion of the "inner conversion"<sup>72</sup> sheds light for us on that which lovers must grasp—or release, as it were—in order to enter into a more robust and enduring romantic relationship. Again, this inner conversion involves an acceptance of love's transience. From this awareness, a profound and free "volition" can finally emerge within the individual, which enables him to love fully and continually despite the fact that his love must be borne anew in each evanescent moment. His understanding that love is fleeting paradoxically expands his capacity to love at all times. "Disillusionment keeps love in condition,"<sup>73</sup> Rosenzweig asserts.

Out of abysmal faithlessness it can thus turn into steadfast faith, and only out of this. For it is only the instability of the moment that enables love to experience every moment in turn as a new one, and thus to bear the torch of love through the whole nocturnal realm and twilight zone of created life. It escalates because it ever wants to be new; it wants to be ever new so as to be capable of stability; it can be stable only by living wholly in the Unstable, in the moment...<sup>74</sup>

Here we can begin to "construct" an image of an enduring romantic love out of Rosenzweig's words. Apparently, the lovers must embrace a dialectic of "abysmal faithlessness" and "steadfast faith." On one hand, each partner must honestly face the fact that love is fleeting and unpredictable; and on the other hand, both individuals must *trust* the love they share with their partner. Both sides of this dialectic require courage: the

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<sup>72</sup> See above, p. 10.

<sup>73</sup> Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 215.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

courage to look upon the fragility of love and thus experience profound vulnerability, and the courage to nonetheless remain openhearted and committed. With regard to the human individual's fearful awareness that his love is finite, Rosenzweig teaches, "The solution to these anxieties and conflicts depends...as does the solution to all of love's anxieties and conflicts, on the lover. It depends on his inner strength to say 'even so,' the 'even so' of bearing it, the 'even so' of letting himself be borne."<sup>75</sup> The steadfast lover must surrender himself to the unsettling reality of love, and nonetheless keep returning for more.

We can infer an additional dialectic from Rosenzweig's writings that must be active in an enduring romantic relationship. This one pertains to the conflict between the neighborly and preferential dimensions of redeemed romantic love.<sup>76</sup> Neighborly love truly occurs when one has developed the capacity to encounter every individual with indiscriminate love, not "for his beautiful eyes, but only because he just happens to be standing there."<sup>77</sup> For romantic love to attain this quality of neighborly love, a partner must be able to step back, so to speak, and appreciate his beloved for exactly who she is at that moment—not for who he *wants* her to be, or for what she means *to him*, but purely for who she is as she stands in his presence. However, romantic love must retain preferential aspects, too, or else it will cease to be romantic. A dialectic between indiscriminate neighborly love and passionate, preferential love is necessary in order to build a truly sustainable and robust romantic love. The lover must develop an ability to vacillate between moments of seeing his beloved as a "neighbor," and seeing his beloved as his one and only—ideally, he can do both simultaneously. In this way, the lovers can

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<sup>75</sup> Rosenzweig, *Ninety-Two Poems and Hymns of Yehuda Halevi*, 25.

<sup>76</sup> See above, pp. 15-16.

<sup>77</sup> Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 218. Cf. above, pp. 15.

see each other through wholly open eyes and let that awareness continually nourish their romantic relationship. Rosenzweig actually illustrates this dynamic quite clearly in his portrayal of the couple on the verge of marriage in *Understanding the Sick and the Healthy*.<sup>78</sup> When the philosophical lover sees his beloved only in terms of what she will be *for him*—through the prism of his concerns about how he will be able to love an Other who is perpetually changing—he loses sight of her. It is only when he recovers an awareness of her name, of her basic identity that any “neighbor” may learn upon first meeting her, that he regains the capacity to commit to her romantically. It is only then that she is once again visible to him as a substantial partner.

These two dialectics that enduring romantic love requires, which we have drawn from Rosenzweig’s own writings, both invoke dynamics of distance and nearness, of letting go and grasping. In these double movements, lovers may overcome their existential seclusions from one another so that their love is no longer trapped inside of them, so that it can break out into external space. As we shall now see, there are remarkable parallels between this and Krishek’s understanding of ideal romantic love as it is intimated in the writings of Kierkegaard.

At first glance, this may seem like an excessively ambitious project. Haven’t we already seen that Kierkegaard rejects romantic love and replaces it with neighborly love?<sup>79</sup> However, Krishek convincingly argues that Kierkegaard’s most vociferous critiques against romantic love are actually against a specific type: *aesthetic love*.<sup>80</sup> This

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<sup>78</sup> See above, pp. 13-14.

<sup>79</sup> See above, pp.11-13.

<sup>80</sup> Krishek identifies three types of romantic love in Kierkegaard’s writings: aesthetic, ethical and religious, and she claims that Kierkegaard also denounces ethical love. However, Rosenzweig’s reflections on romantic love relate mostly to aesthetic and religious love, so I will only focus on these two in this paper.

is the sort of “love” that the Seducer embodies and the Judge denounces in *Either/Or*, and that Kierkegaard harshly criticizes in *Works of Love*. Furthermore, Krishek claims that Kierkegaard’s total rejection of preferential love in *Works of Love* actually amounts to a “confused and inconsistent view” in the book, and one that actually contradicts messages that he communicates elsewhere in his corpus.<sup>81</sup> Kierkegaard clearly rejects the validity of aesthetic love,<sup>82</sup> yet according to Krishek, his writings as a whole, and particularly in *Fear and Trembling*, suggest that authentic faith—embodied by the “knight of faith”—establishes the possibility of a robust, enduring romantic love that Kierkegaard would, and perhaps even implicitly does, promote.<sup>83</sup> Krishek refers to this form of romantic love as “religious love.”<sup>84</sup> She proposes that, for Kierkegaard, the correct way to love is analogous to faith. In terms of Kierkegaard’s conception of faith, this would mean that love is based on a double movement of *resignation* and *repetition*, as opposed to an attachment to *recollection*, the inferior stage of faith.<sup>85</sup> Let us examine Kierkegaard’s vision of “correct” romantic love, according to Krishek’s interpretation, and behold ways in which it is remarkably similar to that of Rosenzweig.

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<sup>81</sup> Krishek, 15, cf. chapters 4-5.

<sup>82</sup> Again, she also contends that Kierkegaard rejects the legitimacy of ethical love, as embodied by Judge William in *Either/Or*. See above, footnote 80.

<sup>83</sup> Although Krishek meticulously bases her arguments on the writings of Kierkegaard, she openly acknowledges that he would not *necessarily* agree with all her assertions. She characterizes her project as such: “Together with Kierkegaard (although not always in agreement with him), and by using his implicit and explicit discussions of love, I shall ask: what does genuine romantic love look like; what is the right way to love romantically?” (Krishek, 8).

<sup>84</sup> One should not confuse this expression “religious love” with Kierkegaard’s “neighborly love,” which is not romantic love at all inasmuch as it is radically non-preferential. We shall explore this in further detail later in the paper.

<sup>85</sup> Recollection, Resignation and Repetition are the three stages of love that Krishek infers from Kierkegaard’s “stages of life” philosophy. See Krishek, 9-10, 12-14.

As we have already discussed, Kierkegaard repeatedly draws attention to the ephemeral nature of romantic love.<sup>86</sup> There is absolutely no way to avoid this heartbreaking finitude. Kierkegaard's writings brim with stories of failed loves and yearnings for restored love, and Krishek observes that all of these unhappy lovers, in their own ways, react to the "essential loss" inherent in love according to the stage of "recollection."

Those who love by way of recollection try to avoid the loss inherent in love—they try to secure their love. And indeed they all manage to hold on safely and securely to *something*—but *not* to what they had originally intended. They all end up without genuinely relating to the actual object of their love. Instead, they all relate to some substitute for it, some representation of it, some *recollection* of it—which exists in the 'inner sphere' of their mind and is therefore unthreatened by external contingencies...[W]e attain an indirect, representational, *inner* connection to the thing—and leave the thing itself behind.<sup>87</sup>

Thus, the individual who loves by way of recollection is not actually able to love the Other, for his love remains attached to some internal projection or representation. This problem is reminiscent of Rosenzweig's image of unredeemed love, wherein individuals are unable to channel their love externally to their beloveds. Kierkegaard and Rosenzweig offer different explanations for this problem (for Kierkegaard it is due to fear of loss; for Rosenzweig it is due to the self-transformation that was initially necessary to receive divine love), but the end-result is nonetheless similar. In both cases of unsuccessful love, the lover fails to transcend her own inwardness and achieve a full-fledged interpersonal encounter.

The similarities with regard to ideal romantic love are even stronger than those of failed romantic love for Kierkegaard and Rosenzweig. Krishek argues that the stages of Resignation and Repetition must be incorporated into romantic love in order to make it

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<sup>86</sup> See above, pp. 5-6.

<sup>87</sup> Krishek, 13. Emphasis in original.

viable. The double movement between these stages is exemplified by Kierkegaard's knight of faith, who figures most prominently in *Fear and Trembling*. In matters of faith, this knight gracefully engages with both the tragic and joyful aspects of life. Through *resignation*—detachment from the empty finitude of worldly existence—he gains the eternal love of God, and through *repetition*—the subsequent return to finitude—he nonetheless embraces existence without sacrificing his faith and wisdom. Krishek applies this image of the knight of faith to the question of how one ought to love.<sup>88</sup> “This religious knight is a lover whose wholehearted acceptance of loss (through resignation) is paradoxically coupled with the affirmation of a possible renewal, or *repetition*, of the thing lost (through faith). He who loves by way of faith, then, initiates a renewed relationship with his essentially lost romantic beloved.”<sup>89</sup> This “knight of love” faces the ephemerality and loss that inevitably accompanies romantic relationships, and nonetheless stands resolutely in the presence of his beloved. This dialectic is very similar to that which we discovered in Rosenzweig's ideal lover. In both cases, one paradoxically gains the capacity to love continually through an awareness of love's transience.

Krishek also observes this dynamic of resignation and repetition, denial and affirmation, in Kierkegaard's portrayal of neighborly love. In the presence of the neighbor, it is necessary to deny oneself in order to regard the neighbor indiscriminately as an equal, yet she must also fully embody herself in order to empathize and engage with the neighbor—in order to *love*.<sup>90</sup> Thus, the same double movement of resignation and repetition takes place in both preferential romantic love and non-preferential neighborly love. According to Krishek, this overlap is extremely significant for understanding the

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<sup>88</sup> See Krishek, chapter 3.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>90</sup> See *ibid.*, 152-153.

relationship between preferential and neighborly love in Kierkegaard's writings. Not only does the parallel structure make it possible for the two types of love to coexist in the world in general, but it also makes it possible for the two types of love to coexist simultaneously in one relationship.<sup>91</sup> Insofar as both neighborly and romantic encounters require the double movement of resignation and repetition, the two types of love harmonize in the ideal form of romantic love. "Therefore, when we love our romantic beloveds correctly, we always love them in a neighbourly way as well (but not vice versa of course)."<sup>92</sup> This resembles the dynamic we discovered between neighborly love and romantic love in Rosenzweig's vision of the enduring romantic relationship, and moreover, it helps us better understand it.

One should not conclude based on these correlations between Rosenzweig and Kierkegaard that the two philosophers essentially promote the same concepts of romantic love. Indeed, we ought to remember our original observation that Kierkegaard tends to reject the validity of romantic love and Rosenzweig seems to defend it against Kierkegaard's attacks. However, as we acknowledged at the beginning of this study, every terse summary of a human being involves reductionism and combines both fact and fantasy. Upon closer examination, we do see that Rosenzweig is less optimistic about the possibility of romantic love as we originally expected him to be. And Krishek alerts us to the possibility that the opposite is true for Kierkegaard. Rosenzweig and Kierkegaard not only wrestle with some of the same questions and doubts about romantic love; they may also harbor similar hopes and longings.

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<sup>91</sup> It is this crucial aspect of the dynamic between preferential love and neighborly love that, according to Krishek, Kierkegaard suggested in *Fear and Trembling* and yet somehow "forgot" when he juxtaposed them as contradictory relationships in *Works of Love*. See Krishek, chapters 4-5.

<sup>92</sup> Krishek, 153.

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