
The Philosophy of (Erotic) Love



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*University Press
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Andreas Capellanus

from On Love

Andreas Capellanus (Andrew the Chaplain) studied and consolidated the developing rules and customs of courtship that defined the practice of what later came to be called "courtly love." Courtly love was an aristocratic practice, and though it focused on the charms and virtues of the individual it was always tightly framed by a strict social hierarchy in which differences in status were never out of mind. Courtly love was opposed to marriage and typically adulterous, which has led some authors (e.g. C. S. Lewis and Denis de Rougemont) to conclude that amorous love is as such illicit and opposed to marriage and that it is the danger of love that explains much of its excitement.

The truth about courtly love is somewhat less dramatic. Twelfth-century love was already varied and served several social purposes, licit as well as illicit, and among its virtues were a heightened sense of individual worth and, in particular, a new sense of the individual charms (as opposed to the economic utility) of women. In place of the quite uncharming economic negotiations that usually preceded a marriage-match, courtly love played wholly on the whims and desires of the potential lovers themselves. Courtship became a form of seduction rather than an affirmation of social status, and the practice thus placed great emphasis on individual elegance and eloquence. Accordingly, courtship became an arena for poetry and music, the rich, sensuous world of the troubadours. The emphasis in courtship was placed on the process of wooing, not the winning. Our contemporary sexual impatience and forwardness, by contrast, would have been dismissed as entirely vulgar and virtueless. It is sometimes said, by way of lampoon, that courtly love was wholly based on sexual frustration, but while sexual culmination or consummation was by no means the "end" of the practice, it was by no means forbidden or assiduously avoided. True, most of the participants in the practice were already married to someone else, and sexual consummation often brought dangers which mere flirtation did not. But courtly love offered important new emotional freedoms to a feudal world on the verge of collapse, and it opened the way to what we

call romantic love, with which it is mistakenly identified. The latter is a far more all-embracing conception which typically includes rather than opposes marriage within its scope and which is at least thought to be available to everyone, not just a small number of privileged aristocrats.

Capellanus himself, as well as his work, is something of an enigma. On Love is presented very much in the style of Ovid, as a guidebook for the potentially amorous, and most of the text consists of practical suggestions for seduction, even sample dialogues and rules for the pursuit of a courtly love affair. But at the end of the book, Capellanus reverses himself and makes clear that all of this is to be avoided at all costs, that courtly love is sinful and his entire treatise has in fact been not a guidebook but a warning. Equally enigmatic is the status of the person to whom the book is addressed, "Walter." Was he a student, a disciple, a lover? (For an analysis of and commentary on courtly love and Capellanus's presentation of it, see the selection by Louis Mackey in Part III.)

Book One. Introduction to the Treatise on Love

We must first consider what love is, whence it gets its name, what the effect of love is, between what persons love may exist, how it may be acquired, retained, increased, decreased, and ended, what are the signs that one's love is returned, and what one of the lovers ought to do if the other is unfaithful.

Chapter I. What Love Is

Love is a certain inborn suffering derived from the sight of and excessive meditation upon the beauty of the opposite sex, which causes each one to wish above all things the embraces of the other and by common desire to carry out all of love's precepts in the other's embrace.

That love is suffering is easy to see, for before the love becomes equally balanced on both sides there is no torment greater, since the lover is always in fear that his love may not gain its desire and that he is wasting his efforts. He fears, too, that rumors of it may get abroad, and he fears everything that might harm it in any way, for before things are perfected a slight disturbance often spoils them. If he is a poor man, he also fears that the woman may scorn his poverty; if he is ugly, he fears that she may despise his lack of beauty or may give her love to a more handsome man; if he is rich, he fears that his parsimony in the past may stand in his way. To tell the truth, no one can number the fears of one single lover [cf. Ovid]. This kind of love, then, is a suffering which is felt by only one of the persons and may

be called "single love." But even after both are in love the fears that arise are just as great, for each of the lovers fears that what he has acquired with so much effort may be lost through the effort of someone else, which is certainly much worse for a man than if, having no hope, he sees that his efforts are accomplishing nothing, for it is worse to lose the things you are seeking than to be deprived of a gain you merely hope for. The lover fears, too, that he may offend his loved one in some way; indeed he fears so many things that it would be difficult to tell them.

That this suffering is inborn I shall show you clearly, because if you will look at the truth and distinguish carefully you will see that it does not arise out of any action; only from the reflection of the mind upon what it sees does this suffering come. For when a man sees some woman fit for love and shaped according to his taste, he begins at once to lust after her in his heart; then the more he thinks about her the more he burns with love, until he comes to a fuller meditation. Presently he begins to think about the fashioning of the woman and to differentiate her limbs, to think about what she does, and to pry into the secrets of her body, and he desires to put each part of it to the fullest use [cf. Ovid]. Then after he has come to this complete meditation, love cannot hold the reins, but he proceeds at once to action; straightway he strives to get a helper and to find an intermediary. He begins to plan how he may find favor with her, and he begins to seek a place and a time opportune for talking; he looks upon a brief hour as a very long year, because he cannot do anything fast enough to suit his eager mind. It is well known that many things happen to him in this manner. This inborn suffering comes, therefore, from seeing and meditating. Not every kind of meditation can be the cause of love, an excessive one is required; for a restrained thought does not, as a rule, return to the mind, and so love cannot arise from it.

Chapter II. Between What Persons Love May Exist

Now, in love you should note first of all that love cannot exist except between persons of opposite sexes. Between two men or two women love can find no place, for we see that two persons of the same sex are not at all fitted for giving each other the exchanges of love or for practicing the acts natural to it. Whatever nature forbids, love is ashamed to accept.

Every attempt of a lover tends toward the enjoyment of the embraces of her whom he loves; he thinks about it continually, for he hopes that with her he may fulfill all the mandates of love—that is, those things which we find in treatises on the subject. Therefore in the sight of a lover nothing can

be compared to the act of love, and a true lover would rather be deprived of all his money and of everything that the human mind can imagine as indispensable to life rather than be without love, either hoped for or attained. For what under heaven can a man possess or own for which he would undergo so many perils as we continually see lovers submit to of their own free will? We see them despise death and fear no threats, scatter their wealth abroad and come to great poverty. Yet a wise lover does not throw away wealth as a prodigal spender usually does, but he plans his expenditures from the beginning in accordance with the size of his patrimony; for when a man comes to poverty and want he begins to go along with his face downcast and to be tortured by many thoughts, and all joyousness leaves him. And when that goes, melancholy comes straightway to take its place, and wrath claims a place in him; so he begins to act in a changed manner toward his beloved and to appear frightful to her, and the things that cause love to increase begin to fail. Therefore love begins to grow less, for love is always either decreasing or increasing. I know from my own experience that when poverty comes in, the things that nourished love begin to leave, because "poverty has nothing with which to feed its love" [cf. Ovid].

But I do not tell you this, my friend, with the idea of indicating by what I say that you should follow avarice, which, as all agree, cannot remain in the same dwelling with love, but to show you that you should by all means avoid prodigality and should embrace generosity with both arms. Note, too, that nothing which a lover gets from his beloved is pleasing unless she gives it of her own free will.

Chapter III. Where Love Gets Its Name

Love gets its name (*amor*) from the word for hook (*amus*), which means "to capture" or "to be captured," for he who is in love is captured in the chains of desire and wishes to capture someone else with his hook. Just as a skillful fisherman tries to attract fishes by his bait and to capture them on his crooked hook, so the man who is a captive of love tries to attract another person by his allurements and exerts all his efforts to unite two different hearts with an intangible bond, or if they are already united he tries to keep them so forever.

Chapter IV. What the Effect of Love is

Now it is the effect of love that a true lover cannot be degraded with any avarice. Love causes a rough and uncouth man to be distinguished for his handsomeness; it can endow a man even of the humblest birth with nobil-

ity of character; it blesses the proud with humility; and the man in love becomes accustomed to performing many services gracefully for everyone. O what a wonderful thing is love, which makes a man shine with so many virtues and teaches everyone, no matter who he is, so many good traits of character! There is another thing about love that we should not praise in few words: it adorns a man, so to speak, with the virtue of chastity, because he who shines with the light of one love can hardly think of embracing another woman, even a beautiful one. For when he thinks deeply of his beloved the sight of any other woman seems to his mind rough and rude.

I wish you therefore to keep always in mind, Walter my friend, that if love were so fair as always to bring his sailors into the quiet port after they had been soaked by many tempests, I would bind myself to serve him forever. But because he is in the habit of carrying an unjust weight in his hand, I do not have full confidence in him any more than I do in a judge whom men suspect. And so for the present I refuse to submit to his judgment, because "he often leaves his sailors in the mighty waves." But why love, at times, does not use fair weights I shall show you more fully elsewhere in this treatise.

Chapter V. What Persons Are Fit for Love

We must now see what persons are fit to bear the arms of love. You should know that everyone of sound mind who is capable of doing the work of Venus may be wounded by one of Love's arrows unless prevented by age, or blindness, or excess of passion. Age is a bar, because after the sixtieth year in a man and the fiftieth in a woman, although one may have intercourse his passion cannot develop into love; because at that age the natural heat begins to lose its force, and the natural moisture is greatly increased, which leads a man into various difficulties and troubles him with various ailments, and there are no consolations in the world for him except food and drink. Similarly, a girl under the age of twelve and a boy before the fourteenth year do not serve in love's army. However, I say and insist that before his eighteenth year a man cannot be a true lover, because up to that age he is overcome with embarrassment over any little thing, which not only interferes with the perfecting of love, but even destroys it if it is well perfected. But we find another even more powerful reason, which is that before this age a man has no constancy, but is changeable in every way, for such a tender age cannot think about the mysteries of love's realm. Why love should kindle in a woman at an earlier age than in a man I shall perhaps show you elsewhere.

Blindness is a bar to love, because a blind man cannot see anything upon which his mind can reflect immoderately, and so love cannot arise in him, as I have already fully shown. But I admit that this is true only of the acquiring of love, for I do not deny that a love which a man acquires before his blindness may last after he becomes blind.

An excess of passion is a bar to love, because there are men who are slaves to such passionate desire that they cannot be held in the bonds of love—men who, after they have thought long about some woman or even enjoyed her, when they see another woman straightway desire her embraces, and they forget about the services they have received from their first love and they feel no gratitude for them. Men of this kind lust after every woman they see; their love is like that of a shameless dog. They should rather, I believe, be compared to asses, for they are moved only by that low nature which shows that men are on the level of the other animals rather than by that true nature which sets us apart from all the other animals by the difference of reason. Of such lovers I shall speak elsewhere.

Chapter VI. In What Manner Love May Be Acquired, and in How Many Ways

It remains next to be seen in what ways love may be acquired. The teaching of some people is said to be that there are five means by which it may be acquired: a beautiful figure, excellence of character, extreme readiness of speech, great wealth, and the readiness with which one grants that which is sought. But we hold that love may be acquired only by the first three, and we think that the last two ought to be banished completely from Love's court, as I shall show you when I come to the proper place in my system.

A beautiful figure wins love with very little effort, especially when the lover who is sought is simple, for a simple lover thinks that there is nothing to look for in one's beloved besides a beautiful figure and face and a body well cared for. I do not particularly blame the love of such people, but neither do I have much approval for it, because love between uncautious and unskilled lovers cannot long be concealed, and so from the first it fails to increase. For when love is revealed, it does not help the lover's worth, but brands his reputation with evil rumors and often causes him grief. Love between such lovers seldom lasts; but if sometimes it should endure it cannot indulge in its former solaces, because when the girl's chaperone hears the rumors, she becomes suspicious and watches her more carefully and gives her no opportunities to talk, and it makes the man's relatives more careful and watchful, and so serious unfriendliness arises. In such cases, when love

cannot have its solaces, it increases beyond all measure and drives the lovers to lamenting their terrible torments, because "we strive for what is forbidden and always want what is denied us" [cf. Ovid].

A wise woman will therefore seek as a lover a man of praiseworthy character—not one who anoints himself all over like a woman or makes a rite of the care of the body, for it does not go with a masculine figure to adorn oneself in womanly fashion or to be devoted to the care of the body. It was people like this the admirable Ovid meant when he said,

Let young men who are decked out like women stay far away from me,

A manly form wants to be cared for within moderate limits.

Likewise, if you see a woman too heavily rouged you will not be taken in by her beauty unless you have already discovered that she is good company besides, since a woman who puts all her reliance on her rouge usually doesn't have any particular gifts of character. As I said about men, so with women—I believe you should not seek for beauty so much as for excellence of character. Be careful therefore, Walter, not to be taken in by the empty beauty of women, because a woman is apt to be so clever and such a ready talker that after you have begun to enjoy the gifts you get from her you will not find it easy to escape loving her. A person of good character draws the love of another person of the same kind, for a well-instructed lover, man or woman, does not reject an ugly lover if the character within is good. A man who proves to be honorable and prudent cannot easily go astray in love's path or cause distress to his beloved. If a wise woman selects as her lover a wise man, she can very easily keep her love hidden forever; she can teach a wise lover to be even wiser, and if he isn't so wise she can restrain him and make him careful. A woman, like a man, should not seek for beauty or care of the person or high birth, for "beauty never pleases if it lacks goodness," and it is excellence of character alone which blesses a man with true nobility and makes him flourish in ruddy beauty. For since all of us human beings are derived originally from the same stock and all naturally claim the same ancestor, it was not beauty or care of the body or even abundance of possession, but excellence of character alone which first made a distinction of nobility among men and led to the difference of class. Many there are, however, who trace their descent from these same first nobles, but have degenerated and gone in the other direction. The converse of this proposition is likewise true.

Character alone, then, is worthy of the crown of love. Many times flu-

ency of speech will incline to love the hearts of those who do not love, for an elaborate line of talk on the part of the lover usually sets love's arrows a-flying and creates a presumption in favor of the excellent character of the speaker. How this may be I shall try to show you as briefly as I can.

To this end I shall first explain to you that one woman belongs to the middle class, a second to the simple nobility, and a third to the higher nobility. So it is with men; one is of the middle class, another of the nobility, a third of the higher nobility, and a fourth of the very highest nobility. What I mean by a woman of the middle class is clear enough to you; a noblewoman is one descended from a vavasor or a lord, or is the wife of one of these, while a woman of the higher nobility is descended from great lords. The same rules apply to men, except that a man married to a woman of higher or lower rank than himself does not change his rank. A married woman changes her status to match that of her husband, but a man can never change his nobility by marriage. In addition, among men we find one rank more than among women, since there is a man more noble than any of these, that is, the clerk.

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Book Two. How Love May Be Retained

Chapter I. How Love, When It Has Been Acquired, May Be Kept

Now since we have already said enough about acquiring love, it is not unfitting that we should next see and describe how this love may be retained after it has once been acquired. The man who wants to keep his love affair for a long time untroubled should above all things be careful not to let it be known to any outsider, but should keep it hidden from everybody; because when a number of people begin to get wind of such an affair, it ceases to develop naturally and even loses what progress it has already made. Furthermore a lover ought to appear to his beloved wise in every respect and restrained in his conduct, and he should do nothing disagreeable that might annoy her. Moreover every man is bound, in time of need, to come to the aid of his beloved, both by sympathizing with her in all her troubles and by acceding to all her reasonable desires. Even if he knows sometimes that what she wants is not so reasonable, he should be prepared to agree to it after he has asked her to reconsider. And if inadvertently he should do something improper that offends her, let him straightway confess with downcast face that he has done wrong, and let him give the excuse that he lost his temper or make some other suitable explanation that will fit the

case. And every man ought to be sparing of praise of his beloved when he is among other men; he should not talk about her often or at great length, and he should not spend a great deal of time in places where she is. When he is with other men, if he meets her in a group of women, he should not try to communicate with her by signs, but should treat her almost like a stranger, lest some person spying on their love might have opportunity to spread malicious gossip. Lovers should not even nod to each other unless they are sure that nobody is watching them. Every man should also wear things that his beloved likes and pay a reasonable amount of attention to his appearance—not too much because excessive care for one's looks is distasteful to everybody and leads people to despise the good looks that one has. If the lover is lavish in giving, that helps him retain a love he has acquired, for all lovers ought to despise all worldly riches and should give alms to those who have need of them. Nothing is considered more praiseworthy in a lover than to be known to be generous, and no matter how worthy a man may be otherwise, avarice degrades him, while many faults are excused if one has the virtue of liberality. Also, if the lover is one who is fitted to be a warrior, he should see to it that his courage is apparent to everybody, for it detracts very much from the good character of a man if he is timid in a fight. A lover should always offer his services and obedience freely to every lady, and he ought to root out all his pride and be very humble. He ought to give a good deal of attention to acting toward all in such fashion that no one may be sorry to call to mind his good deeds or have reason to censure anything he has done. Then, too, he must keep in mind the general rule that lovers must not neglect anything that good manners demand or good breeding suggests, but they should be very careful to do everything of this sort. Love may also be retained by indulging in the sweet and delightful solaces of the flesh, but only in such manner and in such number that they may never seem wearisome to the loved one. Let the lover strive to practice gracefully and manfully any act or mannerism which he has noticed is pleasing to his beloved. A clerk should not, of course, affect the manners or the dress of the laity, for no one is likely to please his beloved, if she is a wise woman, by wearing strange clothing or by practicing manners that do not suit his status. Furthermore a lover should make every attempt to be constantly in the company of good men and to avoid completely the society of the wicked. For association with the vulgar makes a lover who joins them a thing of contempt to his beloved.

What we have said about retaining love you should understand as referring to a lover of either sex. There are doubtless many other things which

may be useful in retaining love that a wide-awake diligent lover may discover for himself.

*Chapter II. How a Love,
Once Consummated, May Be Increased*

We shall attempt to show you in a few words how love may be increased after it has been consummated. Now in the first place it is said to increase if the lovers see each other rarely and with difficulty; for the greater the difficulty of exchanging solaces, the more do the desire for them and the feeling of love increase. Love increases, too, if one of the lovers shows that he is angry at the other; for the lover falls at once into a great fear that this feeling which has arisen in his beloved may last forever. Love increases, likewise, if one of the lovers feels real jealousy, which is called, in fact, the nurse of love. Even if he does not suffer from real jealousy, but from a shameful suspicion, still by virtue of this his love always increases and grows more powerful. What constitutes real jealousy and what shameful suspicion you can easily see in the discussion between the man of the higher nobility and the noblewoman. Love increases, too, if it happens to last after it has been made public; ordinarily it does not last, but begins to fail just as soon as it is revealed. Again, if one of the lovers dreams about the other, that gives rise to love, or if love already exists it increases it. So, too, if you know that someone is trying to win your beloved away from you, that will no doubt increase your love and you will begin to feel more affection for her. I will go further and say that even though you know perfectly well that some other man is enjoying the embraces of your beloved, this will make you begin to value her solaces all the more, unless your greatness of soul and nobility of mind keep you from such wickedness. When you have gone to some other place or are about to go away—that increases your love, and so do the scoldings and beatings that lovers suffer from their parents, for not only does a scolding lecture cause love to increase after it is perfected, but it even gives a perfect reason for beginning a love affair that has not yet started. Frequent dwelling with delight on the thought of the beloved is of value in increasing love; so is the sight of her eyes when you are by yourselves and fearful, and her eager acceptance of a demand for the acts of love. Love is greatly intensified by a carriage and a way of walking that please the beloved, by a readiness to say pretty things, by a pleasant manner of speaking, and by hearing men sing the praises of the loved one. There are doubtless still other things by which love is increased which you can find out for yourself if you will study the matter attentively and if you

have paid careful attention to those things that we have set down. For all the other things that are effective in such an affair seem to be dependent upon those which we have mentioned and to grow out of them.

Chapter III. In What Ways Love May Be Decreased

Now let us see in what ways love may be decreased. Too many opportunities for exchanging solaces, too many opportunities of seeing the loved one, too much chance to talk to each other all decrease love, and so does an uncultured appearance or manner of walking on the part of the lover or the sudden loss of his property. For a lover who suffers from great poverty is so tormented by the thought of household affairs and his urgent necessities that he can give no heed to the impulses of love and cannot allow it to increase as it should; as a result everybody tires to find fault with his character and his life, and he is despised and hated by all, and no one will look upon him as a friend because

While you are fortunate you will number many friends,
When the skies grow dark you will be alone.

Because of all these things a man's face and figure begin to change, and restful sleep deserts him, and so he can hardly escape becoming contemptible in the eyes of his beloved. It also decreases love if one discovers any infamy in the lover or hears of any avarice, bad character, or any kind of unworthiness; so it does for him to have an affair with another woman, even if he is not in love with her. Love decreases, too, if the woman finds that her lover is foolish and indiscreet, or if he seems to go beyond reasonable bounds in his demands for love, or if she sees that he has no regard for her modesty and will not forgive her bashfulness. For a faithful lover ought to prefer love's greatest pains to making demands which deprive his beloved of her modesty or taking pleasure in making fun of her blushes; he is not called a lover, but a betrayer, who would consider only his own passions and who would be unmindful of the good of his beloved. Love decreases, too, if the woman considers that her lover is cowardly in battle, or sees that he is unrestrained in his speech or spoiled by the vice of arrogance. For nothing appears more seemly in the character of any lover at all than that he should be clad in the garment of humility and wholly lack the nakedness of pride. The utterance of silly and foolish words frequently decreases love. Many

men, when with a woman, think that they will please her if they utter the first silly words that come into their heads, which is really a great mistake. The man who thinks he can please a wise woman by doing something foolish shows a great lack of sense.

Other things which weaken love are blasphemy against God or His saints, mockery of the ceremonies of the Church, and a deliberate withholding of charity from the poor. We find that love decreases very sharply if one is unfaithful to his friend, or if he brazenly says one thing while he deceitfully conceals a different idea in his heart. Love decreases, too, if the lover piles up more wealth than is proper, or if he is too ready to go to law over trifles. We could tell you many more things about the weakening of love, but we leave you to find these out for yourself, for we see that you are so devoted to the practice of love as to neglect all other business and so determined to love that nothing in the art of love can escape you, since there is not a thing in it that you leave undiscussed. But we do not want you to overlook the fact that when love has definitely begun to decline, it quickly comes to an end unless something comes to save it.

The Rules of Love

- I. Marriage is no real excuse for not loving.
- II. He who is not jealous cannot love.
- III. No one can be bound by a double love.
- IV. It is well known that love is always increasing or decreasing.
- V. That which a lover takes against the will of his beloved has no relish.
- VI. Boys do not love until they arrive at the age of maturity.
- VII. When one lover dies, a widowhood of two years is required of the survivor.
- VIII. No one should be deprived of love without the very best of reasons.
- IX. No one can love unless he is impelled by the persuasion of love.
- X. Love is always a stranger in the home of avarice.
- XI. It is not proper to love any woman whom one would be ashamed to seek to marry.
- XII. A true lover does not desire to embrace in love anyone except his beloved.
- XIII. When made public love rarely endures.

- XIV. The easy attainment of love makes it of little value; difficulty of attainment makes it prized.
- XV. Every lover regularly turns pale in the presence of his beloved.
- XVI. When a lover suddenly catches sight of his beloved his heart palpitates.
- XVII. A new love puts to flight an old one.
- XVIII. Good character alone makes any man worthy of love.
- XIX. If love diminishes, it quickly fails and rarely revives.
- XX. A man in love is always apprehensive.
- XXI. Real jealousy always increases the feeling of love.
- XXII. Jealousy, and therefore love, are increased when one suspects his beloved.
- XXIII. He whom the thought of love vexes eats and sleeps very little.
- XXIV. Every act of a lover ends in the thought of his beloved.
- XXV. A true lover considers nothing good except what he thinks will please his beloved.
- XXVI. Love can deny nothing to love.
- XXVII. A lover can never have enough of the solaces of his beloved.
- XXVIII. A slight presumption causes a lover to suspect his beloved.
- XXIX. A man who is vexed by too much passion usually does not love.
- XXX. A true lover is constantly and without intermission possessed by the thought of his beloved.
- XXXI. Nothing forbids one woman being loved by two men or one man by two women.

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Book Three. The Rejection of Love

Now, friend Walter, if you will lend attentive ears to those things which after careful consideration we wrote down for you because you urged us so strongly, you can lack nothing in the art of love, since in this little book we gave you the theory of the subject, fully and completely, being willing to accede to your requests because of the great love we have for you. You should know that we did not do this because we consider it advisable for you or any other man to fall in love, but for fear lest you might think us stupid; we believe, though, that any man who devotes his efforts to love loses all his usefulness. Read this little book, then, not as one seeking to take up the life of a lover, but that, invigorated by the theory and trained to excite the minds

of women to love, you may, by refraining from so doing, win an eternal recompense and thereby deserve a greater reward from God. For God is more pleased with a man who is able to sin and does not, than with a man who has no opportunity to sin.

Now for many reasons any wise man is bound to avoid all the deeds of love and to oppose all its mandates. The first of these reasons is one which it is not right for anyone to oppose, for no man, so long as he devotes himself to the service of love, can please God by any other works, even if they are good ones. For God hates, and in both testaments commands the punishment of, those whom he sees engaged in the works of Venus outside the bonds of wedlock or caught in the toils of any sort of passion. What good therefore can be found in a thing in which nothing is done except what is contrary to the will of God? . . .

We all know, moreover, that there is a second argument against love, for by it we injure our neighbor whom, according to the divine mandate, every man is bidden to love as himself. But even without the divine mandate and considering only worldly convenience, we are bound to love our neighbors, for no one can get along without neighbors even for a short time.

There is still a third thing which persuades everybody to avoid love: by it one friend is estranged from another and serious unfriendlinesses grow up between men, and these even lead to homicide or many other evils. No one is so bound to another by the bonds of affection or friendship that if he finds out that the other man is suing urgently for the love of his wife or his daughter or some near relative he will not at once be filled with a spiteful hatred toward him or conceive a venomous anger. . . .

Still another argument forbids us to indulge in the crime of love. Although all sins, by their very nature, stain the soul, this is the only one that defiles both body and soul, and therefore it is more to be avoided than any of the others; clearly, then, it is not without reason that the divine authority declares there is no sin more serious than fornication.

But it seems that there is still another reason why we should avoid love. The man who is in love is bound in a hard kind of slavery and fears that almost anything will injure this love of his, and his soul is very much upset by a slight suspicion, and his heart is greatly troubled within him. Because of love's jealousy he is afraid every time his beloved talks with any other man, or goes walking with one, or stays out of sight longer than usual, because "Love is a thing full of anxious fear" [Ovid]. He does not dare to do or to think anything that is in the least contrary to what his beloved wants, because a lover is always afraid that his beloved may change her desire for

him, or her faithfulness, and whether waking or sleeping a lover can never get rid of this thought. He whom the sword of Love has really wounded is shaken all the time by the constant thought of his beloved, and he cannot be happy over wealth, or any honor in the world, or any dignity, so much as he is if he really enjoys his love just as his soul desires it. For even if a lover should gain the whole world, but suffer some detriment or hindrance in his love, he would look upon all the rest as the deepest poverty, but he would think that no penury could harm him so long as his love was as he wished it to be. A lover is afraid to do or to say anything which might for any reason make his beloved angry or give her a grievance against him. Who, then, is so foolish and mad as to try to get that which forces a man into such cruel servitude to another person and submits him to her will in everything? Besides, even if your friend happens not to be offended by your love because it is directed toward some person in whom he is not interested, still he can never feel real friendship for you until true love dominates him too. For he whom Love's darts hit thinks about nothing else, and he does not think that anything is of any use to him except to please his beloved and be always devoted to her service, and he renders a poor return to his friend whom, in his love, he neglects or loses. That wretch is considered to live only for himself and his beloved who neglects being useful or friendly to everyone else and puts all his reliance on the love of one woman; so with good reason he should be dropped by all his friends, and all men should avoid him.

There is yet another argument that seems hostile to the lover. From love comes hateful poverty, and one comes to the prison of penury. For love inevitably forces a man to give without regard to what he should give and what he should not; and this is not generosity, but what ancient common sense calls prodigality, a vice which sacred Scripture teaches us is a mortal one—one for which no abundance of goods can suffice—and thus it brings every man, regardless of who he is, to the depths of poverty. Thus it forces a man to pile up wealth, honestly or dishonestly, so that his poverty may have something on which to feed his love and something to keep his honor unharmed in the world. . . . Be careful, therefore, not to seek such an antecedent cause, the consequences of which you cannot easily avoid.

You can see now what people will think of a man after he has committed robberies and thefts and other furtive and wicked acts and with what a face a man can mingle with men after he has been found guilty of any of these crimes. Besides, what renders a man more contemptible to other men than for him to be compelled to suffer the obscurities of poverty for the love of a woman?

There is another argument, weighty enough, which stands in the way of every lover, and this is that love brings intolerable torments to all men during their lifetimes, and after they are dead it makes them suffer infinitely greater ones. O what a marvellously good thing should everybody consider that which promises to the living unremitting pain and threatens the dying with everlasting torment, and provides for all lovers that heritage which the Holy Scripture shows us is situated in outer darkness where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth! If you will take my advice, Walter, you will leave good things like that for someone else. But although I have said a great deal about the pains that lovers suffer while still alive, I do not think that anybody can fully appreciate them unless he has been taught by experience.