

August 18th, 2018

What do you feel when you look at me? Love? Rage? Indifference? The question itself may be flawed. In fact I think it is. Is it truly possible to express what one feels in words? I certainly haven't found that to be the case, which may make this whole exercise pointless. Every attempt I've made to make an impression, a true impression, of what I'm feeling at a given moment has fallen woefully short. And don't even get me started on trying to get *other* people to understand what I'm feeling at a given moment, especially a tough moment. It seems to me that the best anyone can do is try to create a poor facsimile of their feelings. So why start journaling? Maybe I'm just a fool. Probably. But that's beside the point. Perhaps, with enough practice, I can make *myself* understand exactly how I'm feeling at a given moment. Emotions are confusing things after all. If I can do that I might be able to express those feelings better to other people. They might even come to understand after a while. Probably not.

August 21st, 2018

Well my first entry just served to confuse me even more, thanks journaling. I opened the page to attempt to understand a question my girlfriend, well ex-girlfriend now, posed to me. Instead I think I just depressed myself. Maybe I should just be a philosopher. They say a bunch of random things on a page don't they? Just pose a bunch of questions that then don't get answered directly? Seems like something I can do after bombing attempt #1 at answering a difficult question. But maybe responding 'I don't know' isn't actually an acceptable answer to deep questions. It's certainly an honest one. I've never been in love before, never even had a girlfriend before my junior year of high school. Even now that I've graduated, how am I supposed to know what that feels like? Or if I've gotten there at all? I was still figuring out how

to effectively remove a bra. Love seems a little out of the picture at that point, eh? So 'I don't know' seemed the most appropriate response at the time. Clearly she didn't think so. But how could I say that she made me sick in a way that wasn't offensive? Not sure I want to be in love if it's the same thing I had with her. Heart beating way too fast and skipping a beat when I see her, sweating, stomach in knots, weird poops at weird times. No thanks, gross.

August 30th, 2018

So yeah. Love. Guess that's what I'm stuck on right now. I'm just assuming that was the correct answer to the question. Well, at least with that person. I guess if someone else had asked it the correct answer would have to be different. But that's for another time. Right now I need to understand love. If I can't fully understand love, then what's the point of journaling? Just kidding. Still, semi-understandment would be great. So let's try to go through this logically to figure it out. That seems like a good approach when looking at love, right? Currently, I'm unhappy about the breakup. That doesn't necessarily mean I was in love with her, or still am if I was before. It could indicate that I care though, so one point in the positive column. However, looking back I'm not quite sure why we got together. We're very different people and have very different ideas about what we want. Like even knowing what we want. Personally, I don't have the dustiest idea what I want from life. So let's put one in the negative column and one in me being useless. All tied up so far, might be a long game.

September 5th, 2018

So she sent me a Snapchat. My heart did that weird skip-a-beat thing again. Strange how even seeing her name on the screen can do that. Does that mean I still care for her even after she

dumped me like Monday's garbage? Clearly besides the point, I'm trying to figure out love here, not care. Some people say that opposites attract and others say that their true love is similar to them in every way and that's what makes it work. Those conflicting theories don't help me here. It might come down to what you're willing to do for a person. If you're willing to do anything, you might be in love with them. But then again, I like to think I'm a good person. I'd do a lot for a bunch of different people. Does that mean I'm in love with them? Don't think so. Yet another useless point. I think I might be *really* good at philosophy; might have even finally found my purpose in life. Still not sure it's what I want though. I may need to write some entries on wanting things. Not an emotion, but still a pretty powerful urge. Maybe after love. If that ever happens.

September 10th, 2018

I tried asking my parents about love. They must be philosophers at heart too. Didn't help me at all. First they started off with telling me that it's an intangible thing. You can't describe it, you just know it when you feel it. That's garbage, I don't know anything. Then they started giving me crap, asking who I was in love with and why I was asking the question. Clearly didn't believe me when I honestly answered 'I don't know' again. Why does everyone hate that answer so much? My dad helped a little bit. He told me some stories about when he and my mom first started dating. Nervousness was the first thing he described, and it sounded a lot like the symptoms I mentioned earlier. So maybe I wasn't in love. Maybe I was just nervous.

September 12th, 2018

I just remembered that I stopped keeping score. Need to read back over some of these entries to make sure things make sense. It also might help me understand things better. I know I'm a rambler, but writing and reading might be better than just writing. So if I was nervous around my girlfriend, ex-girlfriend, then what does that mean? I wasn't nervous about my physical or mental safety, so it wasn't exactly fear. That's a good thing. I was nervous about what she'd think of me. And nervous about screwing it up. Looks like we've got another point in the positive column. If I didn't want it to end then I clearly liked her a good bit. 2-1 for explaining love? Then again, in a year and a half that nervousness didn't go away. You should be comfortable with the person you're in love with. I think. 2-2 it is.

September 20th, 2018

6 previous entries and the basic point I've achieved so far is that Love=Sickness. Not so sure that's accurate. And it's something that everyone seems to want. Not too many people I know *want* to catch a sickness. Can't be there yet. Not even sure I'm honing in. At this rate I won't be able to understand any other emotions. There are so many to go through. Ugh. Why did I start journaling?

September 21st, 2018

I've had a breakthrough! Don't get carried away, I don't truly understand love. Yet. But perhaps the key to understanding it is to recognize it's complexity. The flaw I saw in the original question. What do you feel when you think of me? It wasn't that it couldn't be answered. It was that the answer was so complex it would take quite a while to answer it. So the flaw was that the

question assumed a quick response, when in reality it would take a longer one. Now we know one thing for sure: Love is complex. So complex that it has multiple different facets. My original false definition was false not only in that $\text{Love} = \text{Sickness}$ was incorrect but that $\text{Love} = \text{Sickness}$ did not have a + sign after Sickness. Oh god am I really putting this into a math equation, math is the worst. I've got to go lay down. I feel sick.

September 27th, 2018

Pretty sure thinking about math made me physically ill. Been working on getting over a nasty cold the last few days. I've had a lot of time to think but I'm not sure it was very helpful. I kept trying to come up with things that might improve my definition/math equation. So far I've got diddly. Of course, there are some things I could put. But now it feels like I'm trying to define one thing with something else. Like this. I think caring about someone must be essential to love. Pretty obvious, right? If I add that though, wouldn't I then have to define caring? What does it even mean to care about someone? This whole thing might end up as a giant circle. Maybe I'll just skip over the extra definitions and leave that to someone else. Journaling might honestly be as confusing as math. Just kidding. Math sucks.

October 2nd, 2018

Compromise! Compromise, compromise, compromise. I don't care how similar you think you are to your partner, you're never going to be the same person. Everyone has their own little quirks and thoughts that make them slightly different from someone else, no matter how identical they may appear at first glance. So no matter what, no matter how much you may love someone or be similar to them, you're going to have to end up compromising at some point. And

if you're not alike? You're going to have to compromise constantly. Oh baby, we're cooking with gas now! The definition/equation grows. We're already at Love = Sickness + Caring + Compromise. Pretty darn good if you ask me.

October 3rd, 2018

Now that I've hit a breakthrough, I need to go back to try to answer the original question. What did I feel when I looked at my girlfriend, ex-girlfriend. Was it indeed Love? Well, I got sick around her, I cared for her, and I compromised to try to enjoy stuff she was passionate about. Shoot. Is this whole exercise going to make me feel even worse about the breakup? That's not good. I feel sick again.

October 9th, 2018

I messed up with my girlfriend... sigh, ex-girlfriend. I might be as bad at decision-making as I am at journaling. But let me backtrack. My older brother said I should try alcohol since I'm in college now. Bad idea. It's terrible. I don't know who first came up with the stuff, but I don't understand how it got so popular. First off, it tastes disgusting. There are supposedly different brands of it that should taste different. It all tasted the same... the same amount of bad. Second, if you have too much (which for me was very little) you lose control of yourself. I do not like to lose control of myself. I do not like it at all. Lastly, the morning after is the worst part. My tongue felt swollen and sandpapery, my stomach roiled around like I'd eaten bad mushrooms, and my head felt like it was split down the middle with an axe. Overall terrible experience. And what did I do during that loss of control phase, you ask? Well, I made my poor decision. I sent a Snapchat to my girlfriend, of course. Ex-girlfriend. Stop doing that, idiot.

October 10th, 2018

The Snapchat might have been the most embarrassing moment of my life. Not quite sure how she understood it because it must have been riddled with spelling errors. But the overall gist was: 'hey, I think I'm figuring out love. And guess what? I might have been in love with you! Because see, Love = Sickness + Caring + Compromise and I had all 3 of those things with you. I think. Definitely made me sick. So maybe I should have responded differently to that question you asked me 53 days ago.' She opened it immediately, which I thought was weird. I waited quite a long time thinking she'd respond. Definitely thought I felt my phone buzz like 5 times, but they were all phantoms. Instead I went to bed, then woke up yesterday morning with a massive hangover and a novel from her in my text messages. She apparently did not appreciate all the progress I've made in this mad search for meaning. Apparently 53 days is way too long to not talk to someone before coming out of the woodwork with an 'I love you'... 'maybe'. My delayed response to her text had nothing to do with the fact that I read it 30,000 times before replying. It totally had to do with the hangover. Totally.

October 11th, 2018

Apparently Love is also confusing. My girlfriend... DUDE. My ex-girlfriend said she might have been in love with me too but that it's now too late. I waited too long. Excuse me? Waited too long? For what? It's not like she's in love with someone else already. So how can it be too late? I don't know about most people, but Love doesn't seem like something you can turn on and off easily. It takes a darn long time to manifest, so it should take a darn long time to go away. Unless you make some pretty serious mistakes along the way. All I did was wait 53 days. Not too bad if you ask me. I didn't cheat, didn't yell, didn't attack, didn't insult. I'm a perfect

gentleman. At least I like to imagine I am. So what reason could there be that her Love turned off so fast? I really want to pick her brain about what factors contributed to her maybe loving me in the past so that I can compare them to my own. And then what factors, other than 53 days, led to Love's demise. But she isn't responding to me anymore. Also, maybe I should refrain from using phrases like 'pick her brain' in a private journal about my ex-girlfriend. (Holy moly I did it!) Those could come back to haunt me if the FBI raids my house for harassing people with questions about Love. Heck, Socrates was executed for harassing people with questions. They might think I'm turning into a serial killer or something. So for you FBI agents: It's just an expression, I didn't mean it literally. Phew, dodged a bullet with that one.

October 20th, 2018

At this point I think my math equation definition might become too long for people to easily understand. After reading over my last few entries again I realized that I have unwittingly stumbled across a few more additions. Now I'm pretty sure that Love = Sickness + Caring + Compromise + Frustration + Confusion + Patience + Time. Getting to be a bit of a mouthful honestly. My hand might even cramp if I write it down too many times in the same entry. Not good. Might have to come up with a different way of logically quantifying Love. I'm sure it's possible. Maybe I need to fall in love again to better understand how everything works. If I'm completely aware and recording everything this time I may figure something out. Worth a shot.

October 31st, 2018

I've found her. My new love! Sorry, let me backtrack. I know it's technically November right now since it's so late at night, but I still have my Halloween costume on so I still consider

this to be October 31st. Anyway, Halloween parties were tonight. They were about the third or fourth night of parties in a row. Absurd, right? Why have so many Halloween parties? It's a one day holiday. Always been one day. All of a sudden in college it turns into a week long celebration? Not for me, no thank you. So the one Halloween party I went to was tonight. And it was amazing. Not the whole time, but once I saw her everything turned for the better. At the start of the night, my costume got ridiculed. College costumes seem to be more centered around sexiness than actually wearing something fun. But I wasn't concerned with sex. I was concerned with finding Love. Hmm, maybe Sexual Desire might have something to do with Love. I didn't appear on this planet out of nowhere after all. Something to consider during another entry, it's still story time! So. I dressed up as Legolas from The Lord of the Rings and my friends gave me crap. Then as we were walking to the party I got hit with an egg out of nowhere. You read that right. An egg. Just flying through the night and hitting me square in the chest. I wish I had a real arrow I could've shot back at that stupid car. Anyway, we eventually made it to the party where everyone was busy getting as drunk as they could get as fast as they could get there. I've already done that and it was horrible so it didn't seem like the party would be an interesting experience. But I drank anyway, just to be involved. And then it happened... the sea of gyrating bodies parted and she appeared like a lighthouse from the mist, showing me the way. Of course I immediately turned and moved to the opposite end of the room. Showing that pure confidence right there. But I eventually worked up the courage and went over to talk to her. And guess what? I GOT HER NUMBER!

November 1st, 2018

Holy moly I went off last night, longest entry ever. Definitely a ramble-fest. But it was worth it, a story to remember. When we hugged goodbye at the end of the party it was like electricity was shooting through my body. I'm going to try to find her at the dining hall today because my texts don't seem to be going through, still no responses yet for some weird reason. Love could be in the cards!

November 2nd, 2018

I was too hasty. Muuuuch too hasty. I waited around the dining hall for a creepy amount of time before she showed up. Then I chickened out of approaching her for a bit. When I finally went over, things didn't go as I meticulously planned. I expected her to be as excited to see me as I was to see her. After all, we hit it off like crazy. But as I approached and she caught sight of me, she frowned slightly. Almost aborted the mission right there. Would've been better if I had. My super smooth 'Hey' opening just seemed to confuse her even more. If I'm being honest I was getting a little frustrated at that point, she was acting like she didn't even know me. Then the bombshell hit: "Sorry, do I know you?" Oh. I guess she actually *didn't* know me. My mouth was stuck in this very unattractive, slightly-open position for a minute there as my brain tried to process what was happening. How could she not... alcohol. No absolute way. Alcohol. She must've had so much that she didn't remember the night, or our connection, at all. I cut my losses right then and there. Maybe Love isn't in the cards after all.

November 8th, 2018

I've had another idea. After my heart was ripped out right in front of me (I'm a little dramatic can you tell?) I listened to a few sad songs. So many of them are about lost or unrequited Love. It looks like many people have done this little thought experiment that I'm attempting before. But instead of journaling, they're doing it in song. I don't mind standing on the shoulders of better people, as long as it gets me to the point of understanding Love. Or semi-understandment. So let's sift through some of my favorite lines and see what they came up with. "I could write a book with the words that I should've said, but I was too scared"... Phew, wish I'd have come up with that one, it's so angsty and romantic at the same time. Anyway, beyond being a marvelous line that moves me, this tells me two things. The first is that you need to be honest with your partner and yourself. If you're not, things could go wrong or Love will fade away and you'll regret it for a long time, same as the person who wrote the song. The second is that you need to be courageous. There's no point in *not* putting it all out there on the line, because then you're slightly denying how you're feeling. The next line I found is "I will wait for you", which is a little less deep but it confirms the earlier theory that Time is involved in the definition of Love. Really good stuff so far, I'll keep diving into it.

November 11th, 2018

Well now. I'm feeling a little melancholy these days. But maybe that's because I've been listening to sad songs basically nonstop. I've learned a few more things though, which could help. First is that a lot of songs out there mention physicality in some way. The singer is either missing the person's lips or body or sounds, something like that. So that means the earlier theory about Sexual Desire is likely correct. It may not be an essential component, but the two seem to

go hand in hand at least 95% of the time. Second, there are lines from breakup songs that ask the ex how they could ever trust them again or tell them how difficult it is to trust now that the relationship ended poorly. And it seems to me that Trust is incredibly necessary. It's intertwined with both Honesty and Courage, and is such a key component that I can't believe I didn't think of it sooner. I'm such a dummy. Lastly, I've got all sorts of confirmation about my previous additions like Sickness: "It's the beat that my heart skips when I'm with you"; Caring: "to you I'll give the world"; Time: "love can touch us one time and last for a lifetime and never let go 'til we're gone". So my definition is finally coming into focus... or getting so convoluted that I'll be even more confused than I was at the beginning. Love = Sickness + Caring + Compromise + Frustration + Confusion + Patience + Time + Honesty + Courage + Sexual Desire + Trust. Well... it's a combo of both. P.S. there are also a lot of useless song lyrics out there. "I love you like a love song, baby"? What the heck is that supposed to mean? C'mon now.

November 23rd, 2018

Sheesh, it's been a while. I wasn't sure I would come back to journaling honestly. I've basically spent the last 12 days wrestling with everything I've put down on the page so far. It's certainly been a journey, and I think I've learned a lot. I believe semi-understanding has finally been reached. I have a working definition. Basically an alphabet soup of key components that make up Love. Of course, there are likely many more and the true definition is much more subtle or complex or simple or... yeah, but it was unlikely this exercise would lead to a full and complete definition anyway. After all, I'm still a young adult with small amounts of life experience and little to none in terms of true Love. However, I've reached a decision. Now that I believe myself to have a definition that more or less makes sense to me, I'm ready to face my

EX-girlfriend again. It's time for some closure and a real conversation about what we were and what we could potentially be in the future. Wish me luck.

November 25th, 2018

I did it. I talked to her. Like an adult too: in person and serious, not drunk and over Snapchat. Pretty lucky we were both back home for Thanksgiving break right when I reached the point I've been striving toward. Semi-understandment!! Whoop whoop. Anyway, it was a real eye opener. We were able to understand the things we each did that weren't positive because of how calm the talk was. I realized that I had hurt her originally because she was falling in love with me and was expecting the same. Instead I shot it down with an 'I don't know' at the exact moment we would be heading off to different colleges. But she was also able to understand why I was confused at the time, and I think she sort of gets the journey I've been on as well. Not sure I explained it super well, but she smiled and nodded several times as I told her the story so I totally think she understood. Totally. Anyway, closure is a funny thing ya know. We definitely get each other now, possibly more than we did when we were dating. I certainly figured out that I cared deeply for her, and will continue to do so for a very long time. After all, as I said before, caring about someone is not something I can turn on and off like a light. It sticks around.

November 26th, 2018

You would not believe what's happened. No, I am not back together with my ex-girlfriend (Finally able to say that easily after our meeting). I had an epiphany instead. Everything that has happened: from the breakup to the Snapchats to the songs to the closure talk, even from the egg flying out of the night, has led to a straight up cartoon lightbulb moment.

You're not going to like it. You, as in the non-existent people who will be reading my private journal. You're not going to believe that an 18 year old just rambling in a journal has fully figured out Love. And you're not going to like my final definition. I know I didn't when I first started this thing. But perhaps this weird, back and forth, (accidentally) philosophical journey could only have ended this way. With a terribly vague and frustrating answer to a difficult question. What do you feel when you look at me? The true answer is: It depends. Especially when we're talking about Love. See. Told ya you wouldn't like it. It depends. I've learned that Love is so complex and so nuanced, yet so simple once you are in it's throes, that there is no universal definition that can capture it. For each person in each different scenario Love is unique. There are elements that will stay the same, and I clamped on to some of them throughout this journey. But it will never be the same elements in two separate stories. Even if, say, a set of identical twins fell in love with another set of identical twins and they all did the same things all the time, the elements of Love would still be slightly different and unique. That's what makes it so special. I didn't understand before, but that uniqueness, that unquestionable purity of something that only you have and understand, is why Love is so sought after. It's why everyone wants it. It's not a Sickness, it's a Gift. So as you've likely heard before, in person from your parents or in songs that say 'until it happens to you, you won't know how it feels', Love is an intangible thing. You often won't truly understand it until you feel it for yourself. Then you'll get it... probably. Sorry.