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### Writing Assignment #9: Reflections on Professor Zajonc's Paper

Contemplative love, according to Arthur Zajonc, is the relationship between love, knowledge and contemplation. It is the balance of sharpening our intellects with the systematic cultivation of our hearts, the practice of an epistemology of love. I believe that the role of contemplative love in the higher education of human beings is to bring full awareness to the entirety of life, as Professor Zajonc suggested. I believe that contemplative love exists today, and if taught in our universities and colleges, would improve the quality of higher education overall.

Though not presently incorporated into university education, I believe that contemplative love should be, and that the idea is not as unrealistic as it may at first seem. I think Parker Palmer said it best when he pointed out that, "every way of knowing becomes a way of living, every epistemology becomes an ethic." I do not believe that many would argue against such a suggestion, as it seems easily observable that most people live according to what they know. Parker went on to argue that while science has brought on many advances, it nonetheless "predisposes us to an instrumental and manipulative way of being in the world." I agree with his suggestion here as well, and that it serves as evidence that education (especially higher education) should be offering much more than the basic critical thinking and qualitative analysis skills, since every day life demands not only a sharpened intellect but also a cultivated heart. Why do I think this is so?

The reaction that Zajonc received after teaching his course on "Eros and Insight" is a great supporter of this theory. Students confessed that by the time they'd reached college, they

had learned to excel in education without having any sincere interest in the subject matter. They admitted that Amherst was merely a means to an end, a way to obtain a high salaried job and nothing more. But the value of education should be much more than an instrument for wealth acquisition, or at the very least, if it can be, it should be improved. I believe that integrating contemplative love into our college curriculum will help bridge the gap between pure reasoning and what the world is really like. Contemplative love focuses on “the task of learning to live in true peace and harmony with others and with nature.” If teaching students how to love in higher education is successful, and the current methods of sharpening intellect are not sacrificed, the quality of education will prove enhanced.

The kind of attitude of respect and contemplative receptivity that Professor Zajonc described his students to have parallel some of the experiences I have had in my own education thus far. While beginning with a pursuit of a practical, computer science degree, after taking just a couple philosophy courses I quickly switched my major. I continue to study philosophy, even though I have no desire to teach or become a lawyer (the two primary paths that usually arise from a philosophy degree), because I have a passion for the subject. I am pursuing the education not as a means to an end, but embracing it as a way of cultivating my heart. I believe a study of philosophy helps me to reach a deep level of contemplation, where knowing and loving are one, and enables my actions to be virtuous and my words true. As professor Zajonc might describe, I am reforming myself, “shaping organs for cognition, for a high kind of seeing that is true theory.”

I believe that the same virtues can probably be found in both the sciences and the religions; however, I believe that the religions probably do a better job of enforcing concept of

contemplative love. While modern science has broken away from the Newtonian, deterministic ways of thinking and embraced the latest theories of quantum mechanics, its ways are still heavily focused on a “means-to-an-end” approach to life rather than a “lover-whom-nature-will-accept” approach to life. The religions, on the other hand, appear to focus heavily on contemplative love and how accomplishing such a task is the most important task of all, while perhaps giving too little attention to the benefits and necessities of intellectual virtues.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that incorporating contemplative love into a university education is both realistic and practical. I believe that enriching students with sharp intellectual skills grounded by a sincere interest in the subject matter can only prove beneficial to themselves as individuals as well as to society overall. I believe that this approach to education more closely resembles what the world is really like and better prepares students to be in tune to what its purpose is. I believe an approach of this kind can only promote peace, justice and respect for the environment, issues that could all benefit from grater attention than they are currently receiving.