

Wellbeing and Love

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Wish

No rose without thorns,
Without pain, no love;
Both I would gladly bear,
If there were not one thing left to wish for:

That without a rose blossom
Never a thorn would be found,
And that happiness would never be lacking,
Who felt the pain of love¹

Contrary to Wolf's poem, which underscores the painful dimension of love, in modern culture one encounters definitions of love tied to an ideal of 'wellbeing'. What is wellbeing? It is a condition free from disturbance, guided by the principle of equality in love relations; a state where nothing is lacking. It dismisses "the dissymmetry between the lover and the beloved"², which is precisely what constitutes the problem and interest of love. What Lacan calls the metaphor of love, where the beloved takes on the position of the lover, necessitates this dissymmetry.

In this context, wellbeing aligns seamlessly with the capitalist discourse. Rik Loose³ describes in his orientation text that, whereas love has a relation to pain, the current discourses of science and capitalism try to obfuscate it. Both science and capitalism promise solutions of jouissance for the subject.

Wellbeing excludes the torment and suffering that love entails. Unlike Freud's description of *Glück* [luck] as an "episodic phenomenon"⁴, wellbeing presents itself as a sustained, uninterrupted state. In this sense, love guided by the ideal of wellbeing is a new form of the Platonic illusion of the spherical human⁵, – it denies the fact of the sexual non-relation that defines the speaking being.

The pluralisation of the name-of-the-father and the fraternisation of the capitalist discourse with science in our liquid society⁶ have profoundly shaped how love relations are conceptualised within cultural discourse. 'Wellbeing love' is unable to sustain, precisely in the moment when love reveals its painful dimension. Love, in this guise, becomes a new modality of addiction – one, then another, and another.

Contrary to *wellbeing*, psychoanalysis, which unfolds at its core an experience of love, which Freud called transference, offers the subject a possibility of *well-saying* within the frame of an

¹ Wolf, F. A., Wunsch. *August Wolf's gesammelte und nachgelassene Schriften* Dresden Verlagsbuchhandlung von Rudolf Kuntze, 1864, pp. 69–70. Author translation.

² Bosquin-Caroz, P., "Painful Love". *Presentation of the 2025 NLS congress theme*, 2024, p. 1.

³ Loose, R., "Love and Discourses". *Blog Orientation text for the 2025 NLS congress*.

⁴ Freud, S., "Civilisation and its Discontents" (1930), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXI*, London: Hogarth Press, 1961, p. 76.

⁵ Platon, *Symposion*. Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 2006, pp. 55–59.

⁶ Bauman, Z. *Liquid love. On the frailty of human bonds*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003.

analytic session; beginning from the unease of the subject in relation to his/her love condition, about which he/she doesn't want to know anything. Not with the aim to attain 'wellbeing' but rather to find a singular solution to make the sexual non-relation bearable, which science and capitalism make exist.