

DIXON LI / Desire: an Étude

Lust

Capitalism's favorite form of wanting. Through lust, the regular speed and velocity of relation is increased as desire works double-time to bridge the distance between the loved object and the lover. However, the danger of such intensity is the possibility that desire drives the lover past, rather than to, the loved object.

Mourning

Mourning bespeaks a desire for the lost love object, but most importantly, the part of the self most involved with, or activated by, the gone. The parting of a friend is equally a valediction for the "you" the friend enabled. In mourning we can most properly acknowledge the indebtedness of the self to other objects and subjects. Indeed, mourning shows us the susceptibility that love induces, as our loved object's proximity allows it to absorb residues of ourselves. For we are nothing if not spectral by those we love as loving means becoming what the loved needs, a being made subject by love's fetishistic and fascinated gaze.

Envy

Though we frequently think of envy as wanting something that is lacking, it would be more accurate to think of envy as wanting something that you have lost. For envy is a subtle form of mourning. To feel that something is lacking, to experience an "ache" for someone, one must have first known what having that thing felt like. While jealousy means the fear of losing something, envy is the mourning that occurs when loss has already occurred. To envy something is to want a substitute or compensation that offers the possibility of regress.

To envy a house or a lifestyle is less about wanting to have those things than a form of mourning for a state of happiness and peace (early childhood?) where material lack had not yet been felt. To envy a too-expensive or exclusive commodity is actually to mourn a state when one did not know one didn't have (or couldn't

afford) that very thing. Envy of eloquence or intelligence mourns a time when one could assume that everything that one wanted to express would come across clearly (a state before the Oedipal?); this form of envy is thus an elegy for a faith in the reciprocity of communication. Envy of style and beauty is a form of mourning for a time when one did not have to care about being stylish or beautiful. Similarly, envying ability is to mourn a time when one did not have to feel inadequate.

Envy turns out to be mourning for a simpler life.

Fascination

Desire at its most curious, the most childlike and innocent form of wanting. To be fascinated is to be seduced by something unknown that holds the promise of future knowledge. The object of fascination, in the best instances, draws out immanent qualities not yet realized. Examples include beauty, imagination, kindness, or artistic/athletic ability.

Limerence, the physiological state of starting to talk to your crush, similar to artistic inspiration, allows one to be hopeful and ecstatic, open to new experience. Fascination thus can lead us to new states of being, making it a psychedelic desire with transformative powers on par with mourning. This is why an experience of artwork can be so powerful, or why the fashionista desires new skins daily, or why a boy in New England can make winter warmer than summer in Rome. The satisfaction of fascination is joy. To learn how to be with the object of fascination, and maintain that intensity of attention, is a utopian project amounting in Heidegger's *mitsein*.