

## Essay

# TOWARDS A NEW THEORY OF MARRIAGE

© Ann Kreilkamp 1981

## Present Realities

The woman, in her late 30s, was clearly distressed. She wanted to talk.

“Julian and I plan to get married — as soon as we can straighten all this out,” she said.

“Have you been married before?”

“Yes, three times.” She screwed up her face and turned to me, anxious, gauging my response. Would I understand? Would anyone understand?

I understand.

I understand her anxiety, her need to be married.

I understand our anxiety, our continuing “attempts” at marriage.

I want to go further, and develop a new theory of marriage that will account for present realities.

Let’s be realistic. Let’s face facts. Marriage is changing, has been for 20 years. This in itself is not a new idea; many people now admit it. Some would go even further: marriage, they say bitterly, is dead, it is no longer a viable social form.

Well, perhaps. Or perhaps it will eventually die. But those who are bitter betray their own unconscious needs. For if marriage is dead, then why do we see more and more people marrying (and divorcing) over and over again? And each time they do they hope they did the “right” thing this time, that *this* marriage “will last.”

Each new marriage works to defy the odds. “Our marriage,” we want to say, will be “different.” But how different? And how many times have we proven ourselves wrong — despite our “good intentions”?

Within the last ten years, there have been many studies on the changing roles, the changing rights and duties of the individuals within marriage. Yet, to my knowledge, this is the first study which re-evaluates marriage itself as an institution and its changing relations to the rest of society.

That this revaluation has not been made before is no surprise. It is only now that we are beginning to realize we need it. After our first marriage and divorce, it was easy to think that one was not the “right” one, that the next one — given certain changes — would be “better.”

So we married again.

And divorced again.

This second marriage began to change our views on marriage. Or it will, eventually. For once we marry and divorce several times, then either we grow bitter, see ourselves as “two- (or more) time losers,” with a “pattern of failure,” or, we change focus, gain perspective, and begin to re-evaluate marriage itself as a cultural institution and its place in our lives.

In the following pages, I go some way towards sketching out what could become a new theory of marriage, or better, a theory of “new” marriage. This theory is grounded in my personal experience; indeed, it has been forged in me through the exigencies of that experience. The longer I live, the stranger my life becomes, the more it opens the door to my powers of analysis.

I have an idea that no matter how strange my life has been, there are those among us whose lives are even stranger. I speak here then, as one stranger to another, and I ask your help. We need, now, to develop a new theory of marriage, one which accounts for present realities. Our collective psychic lives depend on it.

## Getting Married (Three tales)

“There, now put your arm in his,” he said, looking at us suspiciously. Reverend Love was trying to treat this as a serious occasion.

“Now, when I ring the bell, you start down the aisle.”

He walked the ten paces to the “altar” of this plastic, child-sized replica of a church, and we stood, arm-in-arm, in the doorway, still panting from our wild ride to Linden, Nevada and back for the marriage license.

“Ping!” went the bell. His assistant pushed the button for the music. We started down the aisle.

Five minutes later it was all over. The music stopped, we paid our money and left for the casino across the street.

“We just got married!” Phil blurted out to the cashier.

“Well,” she said, handing him his chips, “then your drinks are on the house.”

I never thought I would get married in a wedding chapel in South Lake Tahoe. I never thought I would play out that particular joke. But then, back in the ‘50s, I never thought I’d get married three times either.

Growing up in small town America, I knew of only one woman who was divorced, and she we all felt sorry for. Multiple serial marriages were unheard of, except for scandal scoops in movie magazines.

Real marriage, we knew, was serious, a life-time commitment. Wasn't it obvious? All our parents were married, had been since before we were born. This was reality. Elizabeth Taylor was Hollywood.

Now, there are children among us who know that marriage is not a life-time commitment, that their parents' divorces were serious business.

Now we are a generation in our 30s and 40s with a series of "broken" marriages behind us. Hollywood scandal has morphed into non-glamorous reality.

Often, meeting each other at parties, we ask, are you single now or married? This is not a question our parents asked each other at their parties while we were growing up.

Something has changed.

The new reality no longer matches up with our old expectations. Yet we still cherish those old ideals, and because we do we still feel guilty when we divorce — again and again and again.

Our guilt, our failure to measure up to our old ideals, breeds anger, suspicion, cynicism.

What is interesting to me is that we are beginning to transcend that prejudice.

While there may still be those who marry again the same kind of person — who continue the same pattern, who fail to learn from their "mistakes" — I don't think these people, *at least in my generation*, are in the majority. On the contrary. Each of our marriages has been different from the others, and through them all we continue to grow. However, since most of us still think of marriage in traditional terms, we still see our former marriages as "mistakes," our divorces as "failures." This remnant of guilt which hangs over the traditional idea of divorce drains our energy.

I think we would all agree that guilt is perhaps the single most common, debilitating, paralyzing dis-ease that afflicts us all, that in order to preserve our health — both personal and collective — we are going to have to root out guilt with consciousness.

We need to become conscious of the historical changes taking place in the status of marriage in our lives. We need to face facts, to become more realistic. To revalue marriage and its function within society. No longer can we say “‘til death do us part” and *know* we mean it. Each time we marry and divorce again we continue to devalue the traditional marriage vows.

One alternative is to see each of our marriages as its own kind of achievement, as fulfilling its own kind of purpose — a purpose unknown to us in its length when we marry, a purpose based on a mutual trust in our own separate and united processes. Divorce then, would be a testimony, a ritual signifying that this purpose has been achieved. In this view of marriage and divorce, there is no guilt, because there is no “ideal”; there is nothing to live up to, there is only process, natural law.

Three processes — one for each of us, one for the two of us together — form a many-layered, interwoven, complex fabric. A fabric composed of cycles, small cycles and large, cycles within cycles, interpenetrating culminating initiating immolating cycles which time events so precisely that we, who study them, bow to the harmony.

Marriage is one cycle among others.

Each particular marriage is its own cycle, its own time-span.

Marriage ceremonies initiate these cycles, and divorce ceremonies bring them to closure.

My third marriage ceremony in Lake Tahoe was by far the shortest. The first one was the longest, the second one somewhere in the middle. Yet the complexity of what lies behind those three ceremonies varies inversely with their lengths.

My first marriage, in 1963, was a ‘50s marriage, unthinking, planned to its final detail. We walked down the long church aisle frozen into roles. We settled down into routine and froze there too, our two sons tense, oppressed, squalling.

Six and a half years later we divorced. That was in 1970. I need say no more about this first marriage. It and its variations are a principal theme of feminist literature in the '70s.

Like many who called themselves "feminists," I became a cold hard woman alone. Levis tucked into tall black boots, I stalked the streets of Cambridge from one woman's house to another, dragging my sons along. Intent around kitchen tables, children squalling underfoot, we analyzed what had gone wrong. Trading stories on theme of husband-as-bastard, we were drinking coffee, smoking cigarettes, smoking dope.

The women's movement was born there, at those kitchen tables. Now we could finally talk. No longer had we to shield ourselves from each other with husbands.

Our analysis of what had gone wrong with our marriages broadened into an analysis of marriage and patriarchal society, with men and their institutions the enemy.

We vowed, each of us defiantly, never to marry again.

We dreamed, each of us secretly, of love, a real love, a real marriage.

I had my wish.

My dream came true.

In 1974 I married again, to my old high school sweetheart.

We had loved each other since we were thirteen years old.

We had each gone on to marry the wrong one, the one we did not love.

We had come back into each other's arms now, now, fully twelve years later.

That second marriage was a kind of miracle. Loving in the beginning, even more loving in the end. We allowed ourselves to enter the old dream, and in so doing that dream proved too small. A bubble, both of us stuck inside it, two yolks in one egg.

A fertilized egg.

One which cracked

Open

And smiled,

As we smile now to think of each other and the story of our two year marriage.

We thought that love, once found, would cement a marriage forever. We looked upon that marriage as a symbol of our love. We thought, through love, we could each of us function together as one. We didn't realize we would lose our separate selves in the process; would each become one-half of the other, as defined by traditional marriage roles.

The marriage, once it took place, subsumed the rights of both of us as individuals. In the place of the two there became only the one.

Now even this kind of marriage can only be sustained as long as "true love" exists. And when it takes place without that love, there is only tragedy. As with my first marriage — Patrick and I had played out the roles, but there never was the love required to make that role-playing not a sham. And it was the discovery of that sham, I think, which made our divorce ugly — as stereotyped as our marriage had been.

The first time I got divorced, I sought solace in women. During and after my second divorce, however, I found myself alone. I knew no one who could understand my loving divorce. Now, four years later, I hear of many such "amicable" divorces, of people who remain friends with their ex-spouses. This is a clue, I think that the view of marriage I am espousing here is already incorporating itself into society.

## What Is Love?

What is love? And what has love to do with marriage? Is love perhaps only one name (or one manifestation) for that mysterious force which compels us into meeting a certain someone? Has the real purpose of marriage nothing to do with that initial

compulsion? Is “love” but the context, the pretext, the matrix, inducing us to marry, to commit ourselves to each other for a certain purpose?

If so, then the more conscious the marriage, the more the two individuals will understand the meaning of love, and the difference between love and purpose. They will recognize love for what it is and isn't: the romantic “dream” is just that, a dream. A necessary dream, sometimes. Without it, we would not meet each other, marry one another, struggle with one another. Develop, each of us, through the marriage commitment, exactly what is needed in our own particular evolutions.

Traditional marriages, however, are usually unconscious. For them, love and marriage go together like horse and carriage. And so, for them, when love dies, the marriage does too. Or, it continues “for the children” — its original (unconscious) purpose. Either way, these loveless marriages are tragic, especially for their effect on the children, who either live in two houses, or in one house with two strangers.

When love dies in a traditional marriage, then either it continues as a sham or it is broken. Either way, the children suffer for our “mistakes.” They suffer the too early knowledge that the world is not one, it is two.

There is one parent.

And there is the other.

Who am I?

Which parent am I to be “loyal” to?

So these children (usually unconsciously) ask themselves, as their parents continue to “hate” each other. One of the indices of a hateful divorce is, I think, the quality of the “love” the parents did or pretended to have for one another. To the extent that our love remains “romantic,” dis-illusion is sooner or later the result.

If, on the other hand, we learn to think of our marriages as task-oriented, as purposeful cycles, then we will continue to love, and better — we will begin to plumb the depths of love, even . . . to learn to let each other go.

## Love, and Purpose

Until the advent of birth control, every marriage had an obvious purpose: children, the continuation of the race. What is important for us to recognize now, and recognize fully, is that this purpose is no longer the only one possible. That our purposes, in marriage, are relative to our individual needs (whether or not we know them ). That if our individual needs are for children, then we must be fully conscious of this, and of our future children's needs — and *be prepared to remain together for at least twenty years*.

Each marriage cycle has its own purpose, and none of them need be tragic.

Take the story of my second marriage, for example.

That marriage was childless. Except for summer visits, my own sons were with their father, 2000 miles away, and I had been sterilized prior to this marriage. So its purpose, obviously, was not to produce children. And in this case, nor did the love ever die. The marriage ended after two years, and yet through it the quality of our love had changed, grown, lightened up.

I loved Dick as a teenager, I loved him throughout the process of marriage and divorce; I will always love him. I see that marriage now, as but a two-year cycle, a certain temporary form taken by this enduring relationship.

In the beginning as teenagers, and then in the beginning again, twelve years later, our love was a desire love, an emotional love. We came back together to fulfill that desire, to act through those emotions. And when that process was complete, our love had enlarged. No longer did we desire one another. Each of us incorporated into ourselves the desire love that the other had to give. Each of us grew fuller, more complete, thanks to this experience. And in the process, each of us changed. We no

longer needed each other to complete what was missing in ourselves. Now each of us, completed, was free to pursue his/her own and separate path.

This then, was the purpose of our marriage — to fill each other up and then to free each other, let each other go.

But, you might say, now that we were two full people, why couldn't we continue the marriage and drop the roles? I asked myself that too; I asked him that. He did not understand. He liked the role he was playing; he was sorry I did not like mine.

He didn't understand. I grew bored, restless. I wanted our relationship to "move," change. But there was nowhere for it to go. Its purpose had been attained. Our lessons together had been learned. Our paths no longer converged — nor could they run parallel. Our paths were now, so to speak, "incompatible."

He wanted to pursue one kind of life, with a wife who was there, supporting him, in the background, by his side. I wanted to pursue the same kind of foreground life that he did, with a husband as full partner in that endeavor.

At the end of my first marriage I had become a cold hard woman, hating men. At the end of my second marriage I had learned through Dick's love, to love myself. Both marriages carried their lessons with them. The first, the lesson, through friction, to develop my own male ego; the second, through love, to develop my female side. Or at least I thought I had. I was androgynous now, so I thought. I was living alone, both sides of myself active in the world . . .

Back in the secret recess of my heart there was this nagging knowledge — that I couldn't live alone forever, that as developed as my male side was, it was still much stronger than my female side; that this imbalance would eventually turn me into a cold hard woman again. I didn't want that. I knew that if I were to go on being effective in the world, I would have to develop my nurturing, female side more. What that meant, I didn't know. All I knew was that after four years alone I was losing energy.

Lake Tahoe, October 17, 1980. My third marriage. This one no surprise. After the second time, I knew I could never say never again. The surprise, this time, was that it had come under such circumstances.

The first time I married, I didn't know any better.

The second time I wanted to, despite what I knew.

The third time it didn't matter whether I wanted to or not. The third time was not romantic. It seemed unavoidable.

When our lives become strange, when every decision we make is with our own death in mind, then it is that the stories of our lives become legend. They seem to make no sense to others, yet they fascinate, titillate. My divorce to my hometown sweetheart was one of those stories. "Why? Why? Why when they loved each other so much?"

And if my meeting and parting with Dick was strange, then my meeting with Phil was that much stranger.

After Dick, and until I met Phil, I was pretty much in control of what happened to me. I could make plans and execute them.

I met Phil last July (1980). From then on there has been this continuous emergency, a river of blood, running out of and into Phil. Not always. Or he would be dead by now. But his time is running out. His transformation process is culminating. Either he will die soon, and very suddenly, after the slow, gradual decline of the last fourteen months, or he will die and be reborn, a changed man.

I am but the midwife.

I am *not* his mother. I do not, I must not attach myself to this man's dis-ease. If I did that, I would go down with him, I would enter that black hole and be swallowed.

Instead, I participate as fair witness to this crucifixion.

Phil and I are together for a purpose, something no one knows. There have been many tests. There is, first of all, Phil's reputation as "con man, cowboy"; there is mine as "teacher, truth-teller." What this combination of images produces in the world around us, I don't know. All I know is, despite (because of?) Phil's illness, and the transformation process he is undergoing, I am feeling more and more myself, and able, this time, to use the role of wife to full advantage. Doctors and hospitals cannot ignore me. As "wife" I help shield him from unnecessary medical and surgical intrusion.

Phil's illness is one that plagues mankind. Tension, anger, high blood pressure, and with him, lack of early nurturing, war wounds . . . I think the picture of Yoko Ono and John Lennon on the cover of a recent Rolling Stone prophetic of the '80s. Certainly it describes my experience now. It will describe others among us in the near future. There are many among us with old war wounds, wounds which have now sprouted diseases, "chronic conditions."

And no wonder. The vibratory note of the world is changing, accelerating. Those who already feel stressed by the rate of change are going to feel increasing stress in the future. And it is our stress which breeds our dis-ease.

I am talking here, as a woman married to a man who is ill, and moreover, as the woman who married him knowing full well what she was getting into. This man over the past fourteen months I have been with him has hemorrhaged an average of once every six weeks — enough to require six to seven transfusions of blood each time. That's 64 transfusions in all, 64 other people who have become his blood brothers and sisters.

Recently, there have been clues, signs, hints, that our roles with each other are changing. That finally, after seven long months, we are to become lovers, full partners. At least that promise is there.

Three days, we had of glory.

Three days, of discovering within us the wells beyond his disease.

Three days.

Then . . . then, he bled again. Why? *Why?*

The purpose of this union, this marriage, stretches out ahead of me as a mysterious beacon, a herald, a vanishing point. I recognize a power that brought us together in the middle of his illness, this monster, a power that was *not* romantic love. A power that united us despite my conscious desire not to “get involved.” A power which, paradoxically, through trauma, through continuous emergency, is filling me with power — and a power that is not mine alone; it could be ours, all of ours. It rests, as Carlos Casteneda has said, at the tips of our left hands, and it turns our lives into legends: that power of making every decision with our own death in mind.

There have been many times in the past seven months, when I wished Phil would die, leave me alone. It would certainly be simpler. Besides, I would have been his midwife in the end, his guide, his witness. How noble! How heroic!

Emergency! Chrome, sheets, drapes, blood. Vomit. More blood. Through his mouth his anus into his veins. He is shaved. Pricked. Checked. Thumped. Watched. Monitored. By nurses, doctors, hospitals, authorities, pinning him down, imprisoning this man who valued his freedom above all else; a man who, all his life, refused to submit to any authority whatsoever. A warrior chief, a white knight, a former “Black Beret,” and now his body’s become the battlefield.

How many men are there like Phil, war wounded? How many men are to be healed, so they, in turn, can help heal us, us war-wounded women, who can only barely afford to show our vulnerability to even each other, much less any man. How long must it be before we slide, men and women together, headlong into infinity — into peace, not war, into that no man’s land where we are all, each of us, one, and together, one too.

One plus one is not two.

One plus one is one.

One plus one is one is the first axiom of a new kind of mathematics, one which recognizes wholes, holes.

Patrick and I were attempting to each build ourselves as a single one through friction with each other. For us, one plus one was two, and the meaning of two always, in any symbol system, is conflict. There was no room there for the one that was the two together, making one.

My second marriage was the reverse of the first. Dick and I were two separate people when we came back together — the marriage, however, swamped us. There was no room for two there, there was only the union, only the one.

Whatever this third marriage is, there is no question that we are two very different individuals, each valuing his/her own personal freedom at all costs, each brought to our knees now, by Phil's disease, the disease itself dictating the conditions of our union. Disease is, for now, both the sorrow and the spur, guiding us both in an unknown direction. Teaching us both to obey limitations on our freedom. Forcing each of us to be, paradoxically, both totally alone, and yet so singularly united.

As I write this, Phil is in the hospital again. His ninth major gastrointestinal bleed. Odd. I am here at home, writing about one and two and one. Never before with a man have I been able to write anything except my journal, which by this time, requires two large boxes.

Somehow, this journey with Phil, no matter how long it takes, and whatever its outcome, is worth it. I had no choice but to marry Phil. I was framed, set up by my environment. His health, his security, demanded it.

But why me? Me, who has never acted as a nurse before. Why not some more "regular" woman, a woman who likes this business of taking care of someone. Do I have a martyr complex? Am I self-destructive?

This remains to be seen. We are still in the middle of it. The tunnel is dark, but the walls feel smooth and sure, they lead us in some definite direction. Whatever light there is at the end of it, is for now, obscured. All I know is, had I not married this man he would be dead now, and I think this man, for one, is worth saving. Not that I can save him. But I can witness his transformation, share in that glory, and meanwhile make

amends for deeds long done, for children I did not nurture, for lives not held as dearly as my own.

It has now been two weeks. Phil is out of the hospital again. This time, he did not come home to me, and to the usual recommitment to his process towards wellness and our marriage. This time, instead, we separated out, both realizing that there must be something in our behavior patterns together which is not only not helping him to get well, it is, in fact, reinforcing his illness. We “space out” from each other for now. For the future? No one knows.

During these weeks alone, I am realizing that I am, with him, up against the limits of my personality. That if our process is to continue, my personality must change. I don't mind. I welcome it. (And it's about time!) I have, throughout our process, been trying to force my philosophy of life down his throat. That is typical of me. What is not typical, this time, is its drastic effect on another human being: Phil not only rejects my dogmatism mentally, he rejects it with his body: he bleeds.

## **Towards A Theory of New Marriage**

I did not intend to get so drawn into the tale of my third marriage. I had wanted to be more theoretical, to offer a new theory of marriage (or better, a theory of new marriage) by focusing on my three marriages, and the differences among them as examples. This, I thought, would show I mean what I say and say what I mean when I say differing marriages have differing purposes, time-spans, cycles.

That I did get so drawn in is telling: I show, through my own preoccupation, how difficult it is to detach oneself from one's own process — both personal and interpersonal — while it is still going on. Phil and I are still “in the middle of it.” We lack closure, we lack perspective.

The drama of the story of Phil, his illness, and my changing relations to them both is undeniably dramatic. Events move quickly in this marriage. We are dealing with life and death. We cannot afford mistakes.

Is this marriage exceptional? I think not. The stories of our lives are the stories of our deaths too — if we look at them backwards. Their final meanings are shown, sometimes, not until we are dead. Thus the story of any marriage is dramatic, or it could be, once we learn to see our lives dramatically. Our marriages, when given perspective, when come to closure, are like stage plays, and we are the players. The particular characteristics we “act out” — in marriage, in the rest of our lives — are those of our generation in concert with our individual personality needs.

This is a somewhat detached point of view, I realize.

And it is a far cry from the reality of traditional marriage, where “’til death do us part,” and “for richer or for poorer,” and “in sickness and in health” predominate as injunctions. Publically, these “old” marriages “tie the knot.” Secretly, both spouses grit their teeth; they are determined, this time, “to make it.” (Meaning, not divorce.)

And always, when they “fail,” there is guilt, malaise, depression; or alternatively, manic behavior, power-tripping . . . I have said all this before, but it’s so obvious we don’t see it. We still see through the veil of guilt. We haven’t yet drawn back from the veil, not yet seen it as-a-veil, and how it distorts our visual and emotional field.

Will my generation continue to marry at the rate we have grown used to now? I wonder. If we do, how will that affect us, as people? Will we grow cynical, flippant, paranoid? Or will we become realistic about marriage, and learn to view our marriages as cycles, achievements.

Will we finally marry “the right one” and live together “ever after”? Or does this question betray our stubborn allegiance to old (‘50s) ideals.

Will we stop getting married altogether — as in “hell, I’ve been married five times already, and it never worked before, so why try again?” I doubt it. Those old social parameters will not die so suddenly. They are embedded within our genes. They may take several generations to dissolve.

Meanwhile, we keep on marrying, struggling. Marriage is, it can only be, a dramatic struggle, pitting will against will. There are no soul-mates; there's no need for them, or for the "romance" which generates the idea of them: each of us is born alone, each of us dies alone; each of us, alone, evolves to full consciousness.

Those we like to think of as our soul-mates, are in reality, karmic-mates. They are the ones we have not yet finished with, struggled with and for and from.

In traditional marriage this struggle is often denied. The partners choose sides, the role each is to play. These roles are, or are seen ideally, to be complementary. Thus each speaks of the other as his/her "better half." These marriages either "succeed" or they "fail." Either way, they repeat themselves. Either way, they do not move in tune with the spirit of these times.

Or, the two spend their lives in a competition for dominance — or submission — whether physical, emotional, or intellectual. They too, repeat themselves. They use up their energy — and for what? For "the same old thing" over and over again? That struggle is endless, pointless.

Much less often do we see marriages which are creative. These partners do not repeat themselves — in roles, lined up parallel, never crossing; or converging, competing, clashing —.

Creative marriages are created, continually, *ex nihilo*, by persons creative in their approach to life as a whole. These partners exchange roles, re-mold them, re-create their relationship continually through working to understand the pattern that their lives together creates. These partners are not so "romantic" as we'd like to think they are. Instead, they are *conscious*. Two people align themselves with one another in consciousness. Together they accomplish something which neither could do alone or with anybody else. This is the nature of "commitment" in a new marriage — a commitment, not so much to the other person as it is to the discovery process their marriage catalyzed.

“New” marriages are for “new” people. And to move from living together to new marriage is to commit ourselves in a new way to one another. Is to commit ourselves to our own unique, shared discovery process. This process may take two months or two years or two lifetimes or whatever. The faith we put into our new marriage is faith in the meaning-fulness of our experience together, is faith in the process itself, its karmic necessity.

I have been urging here, all along, that we face up to reality, and recognize what is, indeed, happening to marriage as an institution. That we learn to see it for what it is rather than for what it should be (has been). I am urging us to learn to describe our lives and our marriages as process-oriented cycles as we go along, and to recognize endings when we find them. We need to learn to accept, with grace; to accept, as gifts, — our endings. To be thankful, grateful, for the presence of each other in our lives. To have joy in experiencing and remembering our struggles, our cycles — both personal and interpersonal — as accomplishments, stories, tales, lessons well learned.

To some this view may seem utopian, impossible to realize. For others it is already happening.

The alternative to utopia is being merely older now, and none the wiser. To deny utopia is to continue to hedge our bets, cross our fingers, and keep our doubts to ourselves. This turns us into sneaks, cynics — a behavior characteristic of guilt: we say one thing, we do another; we think, plan, project into the future together, yet our voices sound hollow, sometimes, ungrounded. Often our words are only tenuously connected to our feelings — our feelings run the other way, or alternate between wanting, not wanting . . .

Not that we want to “have our doubts.” We would rather think we mean what we say and will follow through.

I am describing here, the existential process of many among us right now — whether or not we have ever been married. It is a process we seldom admit to, even to ourselves — and especially, to the one we marry!

We would rather not think that way. Please, don't! Don't tell me my marriage is only a process, a cycle. I want to think mine is forever, or the next one will be. I like my romantic dream. I don't want to give it up!

I ask you, I ask myself, why not give it up! It's in shambles already. Romance, from now on, will be a luxury few people can afford. As time goes on, romance will become ever more precious, more rare. One day, there will come another generation, and perhaps it will be allowed to return to romance, to resurrect it, transcend it.

We are not that generation. We are the ones who broke the mold. That breakthrough was painful; it left us scarred. It may take our children or our children's children to remold human relations in a new and more stable social form. Or maybe that won't be necessary. Maybe stability is part of an old world — to be transcended.

The theory advocated here, even if eventually accepted by others, will someday be obsolete. It is a theory which covers a transitional age, which incorporates our present instability as its ground. I am saying to us, let's face facts, and invent a theory of marriage which truly accounts for present realities. I am saying yes. Yes to us, to me. Let's root out our guilt with consciousness.

## **New Marriage and Beyond**

Need I say that this same analysis applies to other aspects of our "new" lives too? That it applies, for example, to work cycles — and to anything that can be described as a process of its own which, once completed once, is thereby perfected?

The point is, the meaning of our lives lies in our ability to discover the abstract patterns in our lives, and the underlying lessons, tales, those patterns reveal. This goes for all of us, no matter how many times we have or have not been married.

But to say this is to experience the nature of time in a "new" way; is to say that time is not linear. Time, for us, does not march in a single line, from the frozen past to the random future. That view of time is "old." "New" time is circular, swirling, spiraling, a

widening gyre. New time is perpetual motion, everlasting — each time within its own sphere.

There are many time/spheres, many cycles. Many marriage cycles, many work cycles; many life cycles.

Each of our lives is its own cycle.

All of us work through many cycles of many kinds — through this life and many others.

Some of us repeat cycles, over and over again. We are stuck. Others among us are creative: we partake in cycles larger than our lifetimes, so their final meanings we do not and will not know — in this lifetime. I suggest that those in my generation are, through our changes — in marriage, in work — partaking in one or more of these larger cycles. This makes it difficult for us to “know what we are doing” while we do it. Rather, we are moved.

It is the spirit which moves us, moves me. “You are a free spirit,” my mother tells me. Yes, mother, yes. I came here to evolve from this life and other earthly lives. I came here to gain perspective, to expand my consciousness continually — these days through jolts, lightning bolts, emergencies!

“You move in the fast lane,” she tells me also. Yes, yes I do. I cannot help it. My generation was born to do it. It is our birthright. We broke the molds. Now what are we going to do about it?

It is time to make amends. Time to re-member ourselves. Time to create new meanings, a “new” continuity among the generations.

This theory of a “new” marriage and beyond is offered to my own generation, as an aid, a tool, helping us make sense, to ourselves, of our own new experience. This theory is offered as well to my parents’ generation and to my sons’. It is offered to all of us, as a “new” understanding of the nature of time.

This is the time to encourage and uncover the “new” times within every moment; to see worlds, and worlds within worlds — and beyond. Within these “new” times there is a possibility of “new” communication between persons, between persons and social institutions — and beyond. Ultimately, this theory is offered to myself, as a mirror, a witness to my own “new” changes over the past ten years. Thank you, self. And thank you, that larger Self in which we all live and move and have our being.