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What is This Thing Called Love? A Gender Implication of the Ontologico-Epistemic Status of Love in an African Traditional Marriage System

Abstract

Though its actual nature and content remain debatable, the importance of love in human relations is indubitable. This paper attempts an exploration of the phenomenon of love in the institution of marriage in Esan traditional culture. The paper raises a fundamental question as to the status of love in marriage among these people. The question is directed at either the reality or ontology of love or the epistemic content. In other words, the question is, is there love in Esan traditional marriage system? If there is none, then it is an ontological issue. And if there is, with what epistemological framework can it be accessed? This is an epistemological question. To this end, the paper employs what could be regarded as a working definition of love which could include notions such as commitment, care, intimacy, and self-giving. With this understanding, the paper interrogates the doctrine of love among the Esan people and sets out how gender is implicated in the conception of love and marriage in traditional Esan society.

Key Words

Love, Esan, marriage, gender, intimacy, passion, commitment.

Sevgi Denilen Şey Nedir? Afrika Geleneksel Evlilik Sisteminde Sevginin Ontolojik-Epistemolojik Konumunun Cinsiyet İçerimi

Özet

Gerçek doğası ve içeriği kuşkuyla olsa bile, insan ilişkilerinde sevginin önemi şüphe götürmez. Bu makale, geleneksel Esan kültürünün evlilik kurumunda sevgi fenomeninin bir incelemesini denemektedir. Makale, bu insanlar arasında sevginin evlilikteki konumuna yönelik temel bir soruyu gündeme getirmektedir. Soru, sevginin ya gerçekliğine ya da ontolojisine ya da epistemik içeriğe yöneliktir. Diğer bir deyişle, soru: "Geleneksel Esan kültürünün evlilik sisteminde sevgi var mıdır?" şeklindedir. Eğer yoksa o halde bu, ontolojik bir meseldir. Ve eğer varsa o halde ona hangi epistemolojik çerçeveden ulaşılabilir? Bu epistemolojik bir

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sorudur. Bu amaçla makale, özveri, samimiyet, ilgi ve bağlılık gibi kavramları da içeren sevginin işleyen bir tanımı olarak değerlendirilebilecek olan şeyi kullanıma sokacaktır. Bu anlayışla birlikte makale, Esan halkı arasında sevgi doktrinini sorgulamakta ve geleneksel Esan toplumunda sevgi ve evlilik kavrayışlarında cinsiyetin nasıl içerildiğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Sevgi, Esan, Evlilik, Cinsiyet, Samimiyet, Tutku, Bağlılık.

Introduction

In the traditional culture of Esan people of Southern Nigeria¹, whenever a wife complains that the husband is not expressing enough overtures of love towards her, the questions that follow include, does he perform his conjugal duties? Does he provide for her feeding and that of her children? Does he care about her health, etc? Does he extend assistance and care to in-laws? If the answers to these are in the affirmative, the husband cannot be said not to have loved the wife. This is so even if he engages mistresses, concubines or other wives within or outside his marital home. And so, what is this thing called love? The conceptual definition of love has been of interest to scholars from diverse disciplines. Hence, it is defined in a variety of ways and believed to be of different but interrelated types such as emotional, romantic and agapic. In marriage situation, scholars are of the opinion that love ought to be the necessary component of a marriage if such a union is to work and endure marital challenges. It is therefore regarded as a necessary component for the formation of the union in the first place. This paper discusses some features of marital love in Esan traditional societies of southern Nigeria. The paper goes further to examine critically the conventional conception of the Esan traditional marriage system. The aim is to elucidate the ontological and epistemic status of love in such a marriage system and raises questions such as: Does love exist in Esan traditional marriage system? This is an ontological question. That is the reality of love in the institution of marriage in Esan traditional culture. This question has an epistemological option which is whether love exists but too intangible to know. But whichever way we need to employ a working definition of love side by side necessary considerations in the practice of marriage among the people.

What is this Thing called Love?

The difficulty of explicating the concept of love is aptly expressed by John Shand (2011: 4-5) when he says:

Love is so central to people's lives that the capacity to think honestly about it may be an issue. Love is important to us because it is one of the fundamental ways that

¹ Esan is not only a geographical connotation, it is also a language and a name of a people found in the Southern part of Nigeria. Esan is made up of 30 communities spread through five local areas and is prominently agrarian with traditional cultural values closely related to the Binis and Ibos.

life acquires meaning. As one thinks about love, one will in all likelihood be considering something that impinges on one's own life in all-too pointed a manner. It may be hard to be 'theoretical' about it. It should be acknowledged then that the degree of emotional honesty required in addressing the subject properly, even when the approach is philosophical, might be difficult to attain. Love is, in a sense, everyday, and yet often acute in its importance to us... It's hard to keep the personal out of love...

Brehm (1985: 90) therefore says that "Social scientists have had as much trouble defining love as philosophers and poets. We have books on love, theories on love, and research on love. Yet no one has a single, simple definition that is widely accepted...". Hence, according to Fehr & Russell (1991: 427), different scholars offer different definitions of love. For Freud, it is a frustrated desire; for Watson, it is an erogenous stimulation; for Centers, it is a rewarding interaction; and for Buss, acts that achieve reproductive success. Some scholars have defined love as an attitude held by one person toward another, involving a predisposition to think, feel, and behave in certain ways toward that person. Others defined love as a constructed experience built with feelings, ideas, and cultural symbols (See Fehr & Russell, 1991: 427).

According to Nuyens (2005: 9), love, since the early Greek period, has often been classified into three types namely *philia*, *agape* and *Eros*. *Philia* includes familial love (parental love, filial love and sibling love) as well as friendship. *Agape* (Christian love) includes the love of God for his "children", the love of man for God, and the love of man for neighbor. *Eros* is the sexual love between male and female, male and male, or between female and female. These categories of love result from one of the first accounts of love found in stories on cosmogony of Greek literature and philosophy. Love here is a power to unite. It finds its expression in ancient poems of heroic and tragic events, and was later used in philosophy as a cosmological principle to explain what holds the world together, and why it falls apart when love is missing. The tragic but necessary relation between love and strife is one of the most fundamental motives of nearly all ancient literature. According to the Greek poet, Hesiod, everything started when Chaos and Earth mated. Their first offspring is *Eros*: the most beautiful of all immortal gods. For Hesiod love is not only erotic love (*éros*), that is, a blind force that suddenly and violently disturbs the ordered life, but also *philótes*, the affinity with relatives and friends, which is imperative for a well ordered life. This double nature of love would later on in ancient philosophy be an important subject of thought. We easily notice this is Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaidros*. *Eros* and *philia* (or *philótes*) are in a way opposite, but at the same time both undisputed instances of love. The philosophy of Empedocles included a cosmogonic theory in which *philótes* is the uniting force, which holds all things together, including the human body.

In Plato's days, the common word for love was *Eros*. It meant, generally, "need" or "desire," a reaching out for whatever one lacked. Originally and characteristically, a man felt *Eros* toward another human being in the sense of sexual desire. As the term broadened, a man could be said to *erei* money or music or sculpture or poetry; toward whatever he yearned for, he felt *Eros*. In addition, especially in later Hellenistic times a man could broadly and generally be said to *agapei* anything towards which he felt *Eros*; the words were not sharply distinguished, except that the noun for love was almost always *Eros*, while the verb could be either *eran* or *agapan*. Insofar as the verbs were

differentiated at all, a man might incline to save *agapan* for the love of an object he esteemed while he might confess *Eros* for an unworthy object, he would hardly say that he “agaped” it. More specifically (and still speaking of the days before Christ Jesus) a man could feel friendship for and love his friends with the verb *philein* and the noun *philia*. When those friends were his brothers or when he thought of them as brothers, he could speak of his fraternal love for them as *philos-delphos* or *phila-delphia*. *Philia* was affectionate and warm, but hardly ever sexual, as was usually, but not always *Eros*. God’s love toward man was later to be called philanthropy. Several antecedent authors used the concept of love as a motivational force to explain human and divine action or as a cosmic force to explain the genesis of the cosmos and the human species (Nuyens, 2005: 9-10).

There are many other classifications of love (See Tucker-Ladd, 2005: 919-920). However, the emphasis here is its application in marriage system. Robert Sternberg has enumerated three main features whose considerations usually result in a proper act of love. They are: (1) Intimacy - baring souls, sharing, liking, and bonding (a slowly developing *emotional-interpersonal involvement*, as in a friendship). (2) Passion - *sexual attraction* (an instant or quickly developing motivation or addiction which usually declines over the years to a stable level). (3) Commitment - stable, dependable *devotion* (a slowly developing cognitive decision to stick by the other person in bad times (Tucker-Ladd, 2005: 920-921). It is having an intimate affection and strong interest in the welfare of another. Showing strong interest and concern for an individual would include, among other things, caring for the person, not hurting the person intentionally, lending a helping hand, acting responsibly, being intimately attached, being unconditionally friendly, not putting personal gains first, and so on.

Consummate love has been described by Robert Nozick and reechoed by Thomas H. Smith as romantic love (See Smith, 2011: 68-92). Romantic love in this sense is however much broader than the common meaning associated with it. Usually, romantic love is described as having intimacy and passion but without any commitment. According to Thomas Lasswell & Terry Hatkoff, in romantic love, the lover thinks constantly about the loved one, is jealous, unrealistic, will tolerate anything, is sexually attracted by physical appearance, needs repeated reassurance that he/she is loved in return and typically lasts a few months or a few years (Tucker-Ladd, 2005: 919). Though Nozick would agree with this description of romantic love, he however insists that it is only the first state of it with such familiar features as “almost always thinking of the person; wanting constantly to touch and to be together; excitement in the other’s presence; losing sleep... gazing deeply into each other’s eyes... [etc.]” (Smith, 2011: 69). This is accompanied with the second stage of the lover wanting to form a “we” with the beloved and wanting the other to feel the same way about him/her (Smith, 2011: 69). This, to him is very essential for genuine marital love. Thus, Thomas H. Smith (2011: 68) talking about romantic love says that,

... as I understand it, is the form of love appropriate to all and only couples. That is not to say that all couples are such that each loves the other in the romantic mode: some have never loved each other; others have loved each other, but no longer do. Neither is it to say that only couples are such that each loves the other, in the romantic mode: circumstances may prevent two lovers from being a couple... My claim is normative: whilst not every couple is a loving couple, every

couple is such that it is appropriate, or fitting, that each loves the other, in the romantic mode;...

Francesco Alberoni (1996: 3) adds poetically that

Gestures that make us happy or words that plunge us into despair come from very few human beings indeed, only those to whom we are intensely and inextricably bound. The greatest triumph can be poisoned by a cruel word or lack of attention from the one we love.

The point I think these scholars are making is that romance or passion is an essential building block for a marital relationship, the absence of which makes the love on which such a relationship is built incomplete. Other components include commitment intimacy and deep interest in the affairs of one's spouse. Regarding the nature of such deep interest, Harry G. Frankfurt (Smith, 2011: 72) says succinctly that,

Loving someone or something essentially *means* or *consists* in, among other things, taking its interests as reasons for acting to serve those interests. Love is itself, for the lover, a source of reasons. It creates the reasons by which his acts of loving concern and devotion are inspired.

From the foregoing, it is clear that love is itself not a particular act but rather an attitude that encompasses many other virtuous acts such as honesty, caring, responsibility, patience, trust, fidelity, kindness, etc. the *Bible* (New International Version) summarizes such qualities in 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7; there it says that "love is patient, love is kind, it does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud, it is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." When a man and a woman decide to become husband and wife as a result of their genuine love for each other these attitudes are expected to be displayed. Thus, love or acts done solely out of love as genuine and strong interest in, or concern for, another's well being is deontological rather than teleological. Though such acts like caring for someone will definitely have consequences, if done out of love for the person, these consequences will not be of prior interest but simply outcomes of the love shown. Therefore, love is simply a genuine concern for an individual's well being; a voluntary, self-imposed duty to ensure the welfare of another person not done primarily for any personal gains.

Having examined the concept of love especially as it relates to marriage, the paper now presents an exposition of the Esan traditional marriage system in order to come to terms with the ontological and epistemic status of love in such a system of marriage.

Marriage System in Esan Traditional Culture

Marriage practices in traditional Esan community can be grouped under three various types: Marriage by betrothal, by inheritance and by dowry type (See Okojie, 1994: 140-144). Marriage by betrothal was the supposed cheapest system of marriage. In this system of marriage, a man could make proposal for marriage to a girl from a very tender age (from the age of five). A family could also make such a proposal on behalf of their male child. In the second system of marriage (by inheritance) marriage was by

chance and situational. For instance, on the death of a man, his wife could be inherited by the younger brother as a wife. Only daughters of the *Onojie* family (the natural ruler or royal family) could not be so inherited (Okojie, 1994: 143). In the dowry practice of marriage, the girl of marriageable age (about fifteen years) is given out in marriage to a willing suitor who pays a bride price on her (Okojie, 1994: 141).

In the betrothal practice of marriage, it is apparent that the girl in question does not partake in the decision on who she is to marry. She is, at that tender age, too young to make a rational choice on such matters. So her consent is usually not sought. The decision therefore rests on the parents and the family of the to-be suitor. When of age, the necessary rites of marriage are performed preceding her final move to the marital family. In the case of marriage by inheritance, the situation is quite different. In some cases, the widow might be willing and ready to accept the opportunity to be inherited by the late husband's younger brother. This is possible when, for instance, the man with the right of inheritance was obviously abler and more prosperous than his late elder brother. Also, she may be willing to accept the offer to be inherited if she sees it as the only way to retain some family possessions like landed properties. This can be a strong reason to accept marriage by inheritance since she cannot inherit her husband's properties as a woman. In some other scenarios, the widow may reject being inherited. This might not favour her. She may lose her husband's property to the husband's family members. Some have for this reason grudgingly accepted marriage by inheritance.

In the case of the dowry type, a number of scenarios can play out. One is such that there is some agreement between a young man of marriageable age and a young woman also of marriageable age to come together as husband and wife. This is usually followed by mutual family inquiries and investigations. Here there are decision making, rational choices and consent from both parts. Thus, a day is fixed for the initial marriage rites during which the girl to be given out in marriage is invited to make an open declaration of her willingness before the full commencement of the marriage rites. The other scenario is that where the girl to be given out in marriage really has no part to play in the decision as to who she should marry. The decision therefore rests on the parent (particularly the father) who employs personal considerations in deciding for the daughter. These considerations may include his relationship with the suitor's family (especially the father), certain admirations he may hold for the young man or his family prowess, etc. The young marriageable girl could be given out as payment for debt owed by her family. Other instances would include the *Onojie* family making a marriage proposal to the family of a subject. In these and similar cases, the consent, deliberation, voluntary choices made do not come from the girl to be married.

The above analysis is meant to introduce the entrance into the marriage proper among the people. In engaging the situation of marriage, a number of arts and acts are recognized among the Esan people of Southern Nigeria. The summary of the arts and acts in the marriage system here referred to is that the man in the family is the head, rules and reigns. This is so because all major decisions and policies come from the head of the family. He is also the bread winner, providing for the welfare of the wife and offspring. In the traditional Esan society, the man is expected to demonstrate certain traits, for instance, of dominance, leader, front liner and representative in the committee of families. What this means is that he is bestowed with responsibilities and duties as

well as rights and privileges. He is, for instance expected to perform his conjugal role in procreation, care and concern for his wife children and in-laws as well as honour for the integrity and dignity for the entire household. He is also free to engage in any legitimate relationships including having mistresses, concubines and wives without and within his immediate family structure. The wife therefore stands more or less at the receiving end of the relationship without obligations to major decisions in the home. She is of course obligated to carrying out domestic chores.

Love and Marriage in Esan Traditional Culture

Since the present paper concerns itself with the ontology of love in Esan marriage system, it will be pertinent at this point to observe that in the foregoing representation of facts about marriage practice among the people, the average Esan husband is not unlikely to presume that he loves the wife (or wives). In other words, he is ready to affirm the expression of *Ihoemhon-egbe* (loving each other) or simply *ihoemhon* (loving). This affirmation of expression of love by the Esan husband is not unconnected with a number of criteria admissible on the table of considerations for love. The criteria for considerations would here include expressions that are demonstrable in behaviour and material tendencies such as general provisions for living, care and welfare for the family (food, house and clothing), concern for the health of the wife or wives and children as well as his in-laws and wives family. He cooperate in conjugal relationships with his wife or wives to raise children and ready to defend the family materially, morally and spiritually. These for the traditional Esan husband demonstrate love. The lack of it is not expressed in relationships with other women and commitments thereof neither is this represented in the expression of *ihoemhon-engbe*, intimacy, and self-giving to others including mistresses and concubines. In spite of all these, the man is still said to love the wife or wives and the entire household. In certain scenarios, the recommendation for the marriage of other wives could come from the existing wife or wives for a number of reasons such as raising up male children for the family and providing assistance to the would have been relatively older wife or wives.

Gender Implicated

For a proper appreciation of how gender is implicated in the entirety of marriage institution and love in Esan traditional culture, it will be necessary perhaps to attempt a systematic groundwork on what can be referred to as orientations in gender viewpoints. Christopher E. Ukhun, in the "Introduction" to *Critical Gender Discourse in Africa* (2002: 11), asserts that gender is the defining process or factor of all ages. He adds that gender remains a cardinal element in our humanity which cannot be wished away with any form of gusto (2002: 12). Gender therefore permeates and plays a cardinal role in every aspect of our being including love. But why is this so? Gender refers to the socio-cultural and psychological patterning of the difference between males and females. Put differently, gender is a social and cultural construct that apportions roles to individuals based on sex differentiation (Ukpokolo, 2005: 114), a "cultural construction of sexual differences" (Kottak, 2004: 543). Gender, being the roles expected of the male and female sexes, certainly goes a long way to define the nature of things in our socio-

cultural living. For example, every culture or society is known to attribute some stereotypical roles and attitudes to both males and females and when one does not display such, he/she is seen typically as a social deviant. Men, for example, are usually expected to be sexually assertive, independent, competent, and unemotional or emotionally tough. They are equally viewed as being objective, active, competitive, adventurous, self confident, ambitious, autocratic, unexcitable, rational, courageous, daring, realistic, disorderly, logical, masculine, loud, enterprising, boastful, etc. Females, on the other hand, are assumed to be the opposite; they tend to be described as dependent, subjective, passive, feminine, appreciative, attractive, charming, dreamy, emotional, excitable, mild, sensitive, sentimental, submissive, talkative, weak, frivolous, flirtatious, fickle, nagging, nurturing and friendly. They are equally assumed to be not being competitive, not adventurous, not assertive, and lack self confident (Ukpokolo, 2005: 116). Based on these sorts of gender stereotypes, it is certainly obvious that gender has a role to play in the way both the male and the female sexes love specifically within a marital relationship.

Robin (1973) carried out a research on the question 'Do men and women love differently?' Tacker-Ladd (2005: 022) summarizes Robin's (1973) liking scale results (See also Brehm, 1985). According to the research, females tend to like their partners better than males do. Moreover, women 'fall in love' more often, report more intense feelings (feeling euphoric and wanting to scream), are ready to marry earlier, love more often even when it isn't returned, think love is more rewarding, and idealize the partner more than males do. In spite of the fact that women have more love and more intense romantic experiences (their perceptions and behaviors are more affected by their affection), males score higher on the Romanticism Scales than females and they fall in love earlier in relationships. Almost 25% of males are 'in love' before the fourth date, only 15% of females are. In fact, 50% of women take over 20 dates to decide they are in love. There is also some evidence that males hurt more than females during a break up, but individuals vary greatly.

According to the research, males and females score about the same on the Love Scale and they experience what is often referred to as 'love at first sight' about equally often (54% of women and 63% of men believe in love at first sight). It would seem that men and women love each other about the same degree but perhaps in different ways. Men may be more lacking in experience and believe more of the 'nonsense' on the Romanticism Scales, like "there is only one real love for a person" or "true love leads to almost perfect happiness" or "a person should marry whomever he/she loves regardless of social position." Women may be wiser (as long as their strong emotions have not overwhelmed their reason) and/or forced by socioeconomic reality to be slightly more careful and practical about whom they fall in love with, have sex with, and marry (Tacker-Ladd, 2005: 922-923).

Regarding romantic love, specifically in terms of sexual relations and eroticism, which is definitely an aspect of the components of genuine marital love, Francesco Alberoni (2005: 47) has this to say:

Eroticism as it is experienced by men springs from a focus on visual details (so much so that some men really are incapable of appreciating overall feminine beauty) and on genitals and orgasm. Eroticism for women, on the other hand, is

more diffused, more receptive to touch, smell, and the general awareness of one's own body, just as it is more emotionally tinged and discriminating in regards to pleasure, in addition to being directed at the man in his entirety.

He also adds that women are far more selective than men in terms of choosing a partner. They are attracted to males who distinguish themselves in some way, who excel in some quality—be that good looks, strength, daring, courage, or else for their elegance, wealth, or power. (2005: 50). Women are also more dependent than men. In the bid to feel secured, financially or materially or otherwise, they mostly will choose partners who will grant them such security. This explains why, unlike a man, history has shown that even though women love monogamy and would not want to share their partner with anyone, many will still prefer to belong to a harem or be a mistress or concubine to a man as long as they are materially secure. Thus it is better to be a second wife or a mistress to a rich man than be an only wife to a poor man. Women are therefore naturally drawn to the powerful and wealthy.

Without having the identity of traditional Esan personalities, Robin and Alberoni seem to provide some epistemic theoretical framework in their stereotypes, to understand and gain appreciation of the structure and content of traditional gender stereotypes in Esan culture. The exposition made above concerning the traditional Esan marriage system reveals as well that there is an intense gender power play in the relationship between man and a woman. Man in Esan culture is associated with certain gender stereotypes. He must be able-bodied, i.e., physically fit and mentally sound and able to cater for his family needs. In other words he must be economically independent and stable, expected to be courageous and be able to protect his household. It is perhaps useful to mention here that males propose marriage to females in Esan culture while the reverse is simply unexpected. The Esan woman is also associated with certain gender stereotypes. She must be submissive and ready to be under the authority of a husband; she must be respectful and kind; she must be domestic and hardworking; she must not be too possessive but should be ready to accept, welcome and accommodate a new wife should the husband decide to take one. Given these requirements, the marriage is believed to be successful. These male-female stereotypes in Esan tradition presents the popular image of women as weak vessels jostling to be under the strong male (Cf. Albert, 2002: 60). We have also seen that the man retains the right and privilege to marry more than one wife and keep mistresses in the Esan traditional culture. The same is however completely ruled out of court for the woman. In other words, among the Esan people, a wife could not have male friends outside the marital home, neither could she marry more than one husband. Indeed, the conceptualization is that of 'extra-marital affairs' for the wife while that of the husband could never be described as such. Again, in decision making, the husband has the last word.

It is indicative however to note at this point that the traditional Esan social structure privileges patriarchal and patrilineal values, norms, beliefs, tendencies and attitudes. And so, a gender inquiry might take into consideration a critique of the lopsided, unbalanced power relations between males and females. In other words, there is a replication of conditions that present the dependency theory on the part of a woman. She is supposed to be an independent rational moral agent with free will and responsibility, responsible for her action and choices and held responsible for same. She has a fundamental human right to dignity, expression and relationships, and reserves the

right and opportunity to consent and decent with regard to any matter that concerns her. These considerations the gender analyst would say must be brought to the fore when considering the reality of love as well as epistemic structure or framework to accessing it. And so, from the robust gender point of view, it is difficult to argue for the phenomenon of love when criteria of freedom, liberty, independence, appreciation of integrity and dignity, right to morals status are all absent.

Concluding Remarks

We conceptualized genuine marital love above as one that encompasses intimacy, passion, commitment, self-giving, and the like. It is however obvious from our analysis of Esan traditional marriage system that such were not necessarily considerations in marriage relationships or the “union between a man and a woman” (See Kottak, 2004: 515). More importantly, the ability to fulfill the gender roles assigned to each party in a marriage union was a more necessary consideration for any marriage to work. A woman cannot complain not to be loved by the husband even if he has mistresses or take a new wife as long as he provides her needs and cater for the family. When this material/behavioural tendencies that are implicated in traditional Esan marriage system are brought before our understanding of love for interrogation, it will not pass the test. How then can love in Esan be accessed? The epistemological framework through which one can access an Esan concept of love is a material/pragmatic epistemological framework. This is because rather than having a genuine concern for, and commitment towards, one another that is duty-based, parties to a marriage in traditional Esan system of marriage were concerned more about the material consequences of their union. The society was concerned about the protection and the provision that the husband owes his wife as a matter of duty such that if he was not providing these, he can be said not to love her. The man also was more concerned about the domestic duties, conjugal responsibilities, and child-bearing responsibility that the wife owed him. Thus if accessed from our conceptualization of love in the first section of this paper, the phenomenon of love in Esan traditional marriage system would pose an ontological problem or, at least, continuously elude the precept, principles, norms, values, canons and ideals that constitute our chosen theoretical epistemic framework of love such as intimacy, passion, commitment, self-giving, care, patience, honesty, and so on

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