

# The Spark

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# The Spark

An Original Philosophy

By Mark Hansen

This manuscript is dedicated to Arly Crawford,  
who although wasn't romantically interested,  
inflamed in me a desire to understand  
what makes us interested in the first place.

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## Section I:

Why are we romantically interested in the people we are?

Throughout the time line of civilization and in all cultures people have fallen in love. The classic story of boy meets girl has been told in many different ways. There is the tragedy, the tear jerker, the poetic justice ending and the happily-ever-after. Poets have written sonnets and musicians have sung ballads to explain the beauty, power and magic of this phenomenon. Many people today are driven by the hope of finding their "true love." This quest for love is perhaps the longest run endurance race in history. Yet, even with the uncertain finish line and hazard course, thousands of people every day join this marathon.

If asked what love is, many would have a hard time describing it. Psychologists and philosophers have written books on this subject. Some have been successful and others have been forgotten. But if one desires to understand love, they must step back and not examine love itself, but rather what attracts one person to another. Going to the very root of the matter or the foundation, is what stepping back is all about. If we examine the foundation of something, instead of probing the object itself, we will better understand it's structure. Stepping back from love, we can see that it usually takes an individual many relationships to find a love that lasts. There are also those who never seem to be able to find love. For them, love is an elusive thing, only a dream or an illusion. Upon examining love's shifty nature and dead ends, leads us to realize that there must be a level which proceeds love. This preliminary level to love is the romantic interested level. But before we proceed, it is important for us to define a few key terms, because the degree to which we understand what we pursue, will increase our ability to obtain that pursuit.

Love: an intense feeling of deep affection for someone of the opposite sex.

Romantically Interested: having an emotional appeal or attraction based above and beyond that of a general association or friendship.

Although these definitions are relatively simple, they will suffice for our discussion here. In this text, the love referred to is the romantic love between a couple, not the charity-love or general concern/devotion we feel for friends, family, or associates. Nor is it referring to physical intimacy, but is limited strictly to the emotion of love. Also, it is important to note that these definitions are limited to the attraction between two individuals of the

opposite sex. This paper does not at any point try to address the issue of homosexuality.

We know that substantial interest is embodied in the romantic interest level, but what causes the initial attraction? What is the reason behind a relationship being elevated from an association or friendship, to the romantic interest level? Why do some people trigger a romantic interest in some individuals, but not others? Why do longtime friends suddenly find that they are romantically interested in each other? What causes this change? Why do people who “click,” not always have a romantic interest for each other? Why is it that one person can be romantically interested in someone, yet, the other side won't reciprocate those same feelings? And why do some individuals seem to find people that are romantically interested in them more easily than others?

These are just a few questions or situations, that help us begin to see the vast experiences people have with romantic interests. Since we have identified the romantic interest level, it is crucial to seek out what its cause is. When asked why certain people are romantically interested in the people they are, most will have a hard time pin-pointing the reason. Try asking yourself: why are you romantically interested in the people you are? Most people say they don't know or give a superficial answer. This is what we desire to discover: why we are romantically interested in the people we are?

People with a casual answer usually respond that the people they are attracted to are, “what they are looking for.” In other words, they have imagined an ideal companion that they are seeking and individuals that reflect their imagined model, are those they are attracted to. This may seem shallow, but we all seem to have a mental list of what we seek in a partner. However, there are times when two people meet the qualifications on our list and yet, we are romantically interested in one and not the other. What lines of distinction do we draw between the two? At other times, we are interested in people who only meet a few of the prerequisites on our lists. Why is this? And how does it account for all the other situations we have questioned? If we step back here what do we find? What we find, is that there seems to be some mysterious individual internal spark that is triggered to move us from the level of association or friendship, to the romantic interest level. This spark is a very significant finding. And, since it may have many different meanings in different circles, we will define it here:

**The Spark:** the triggering or stirring of the romantic interest one individual has for another of the opposite sex; the movement or elevation from the associative or friendship level to that of the romantic interest level.

This definition of the spark has reference to only one individual. This is not to be confused with a mutual spark or chemistry between two people. This definition has to be one-sided because, one person can be romantically interested in an individual, yet that person may not be romantically interested in return. Or in other words, the spark happens individually. However, since in some instances there seems to be "love at first sight," or both parties are romantically interested in each other, the term *mutual spark* will be used to refer to that situation.

## Section II:

### Questioning the Spark

Since we now have stepped back to the foundation point, that being the spark, we may amend our initial question of why are we romantically interested in the people we are, to what causes the spark? Since we know what the spark is: the triggering or elevation of the romantic interest, we may begin by making an inquiry into what constitutes the spark; its substance and properties. Let us begin by questioning the essence of the spark to seek what we 1) conclude from the questions themselves, and 2) what we may derive from the answers to the questions.

- \*What attribute(s) does the spark possess?
- \*Does the spark grow?
- \*How long does the spark last?
- \*Does the spark burn out?
- \*Does the spark lead to love?
- \*Can the spark exist in magnitudes?
- \*Is the spark subjective and/or variable?
- \*Can someone's spark ignite someone else's spark?
- \*Can the spark be engaged? How?
- \*Is the spark a cultural phenomenon?
- \*How important is the spark?
- \*Is the spark the foundation or can we step back further?

There are many more questions that may be asked about the essence of the spark, but these few are refined key questions that will help us better understand the spark. Also, further clarification about the spark will be revealed as we scrutinize other aspects of this philosophy. However, the last question is critical to examine first because the answer may impact our other questions.

When we stepped back from the level of love we noticed the level of romantic interest. When we stepped back from there, we saw the associative/friendship level. If we had gone further back, we would have found the stranger level or the enemy level. Instead, we looked closely as we stepped back from the romantic interest level to see how a person got there and then we found the spark. So it may not be that we need to step back from the spark, but that we need to find out why the spark exists in the first place. Since the definition of the spark is the moving from the associative/

friendship level to romantic interest, it seems reasonable to conclude that it is the foundation point. But why do we need to move in the first place? In this very question we find the answer. We do *need* to move. This is why the spark exists, because we all have a void. But what is this void and how does it help us understand what causes the spark?

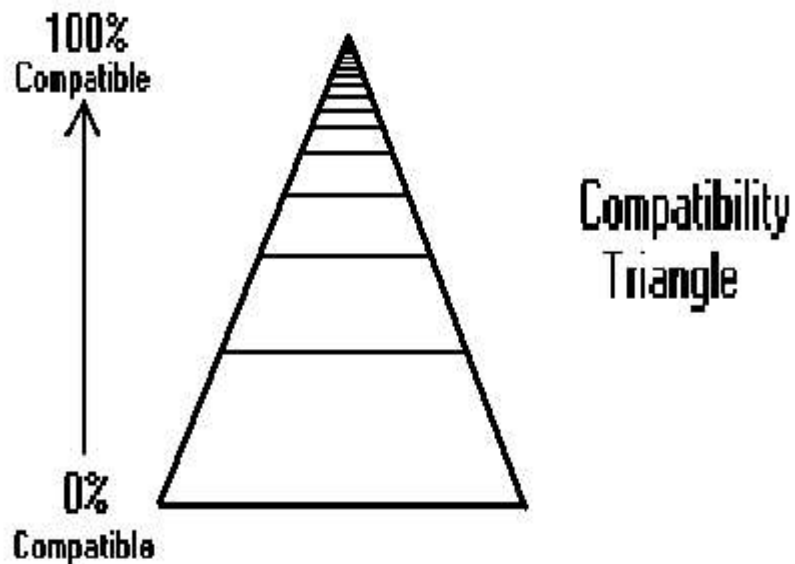
### Section III: The Void

Before we define what the void is there is a metaphor and a diagram that will help illustrate this idea. First the story. It is a legend told by a Native American tribe:

*When the world was formed there existed only one kind of people. These people were complete. There was neither male nor female. They existed as one. Then one day this people angered the gods. To punish them, the gods threw lighting bolts from the heavens and split the people in two. The people were no longer complete, but were two halves of one whole. These two halves spent their lives seeking out their other half, so that they could be complete again. These two halves were male and female. When one side finally found their other half, they became whole again.*

The concept behind this story is that, although men and women are different, their differences balance each other out. This notion of two halves becoming one is not a new idea. In the Old Testament in Genesis chapter 2 verse 24 it states: *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.* Naturally men have traits that women don't and women have been endowed with attributes that men don't have. Put together correctly, the two halves complement each other. We find another passage from Genesis which helps us to further understand the void. After creating Adam God makes this declaration in chapter 1 verse 18: *It is not good that...man should be alone.* It stands to reason that it is equally not good for women to be alone. Again, it is clear that we are meant to have a mate in this life. Ultimately, we all seek the most choice companion we can. Some have even theorized about the existence of a soul mate, someone who is absolutely perfect for us in every way. At this point, let us examine the chart, which is known as the Compatibility Triangle.

The Compatibility Triangle shows the percent of people one may be able to get along with. At the bottom of the graph is zero percent compatibility and has the largest percentage of people. As one moves up the triangle, the compatibility percentage increases, but the number of people an individual is compatible with decreases. At the very top would be the single individual that you



would be 100% compatible with. This would be your soul mate. However, it is just as easy to presume that instead of just one at 100% compatibility there may be a handful there. This would mean that you might have more than one soul mate, or that there is more than one person you are 100% compatible with. As to which of these two ways of thinking is correct, it seems possible that either could both be true. So it is up to individual to decide which way he/she believes. However, what we may draw from this diagram is that we seem to be more compatible with some people than with others.

Before we talk about how compatibility relates to the void, it seems a good time to define exactly what the void is.

The Void: the emotional and characteristic lackings or needs of an individual.

Each person has a void which needs to be filled. We feel this void and seek out someone who can fill it. This is what the Indian myth and Bible were talking about, in that only someone of the opposite sex can fill our void. This helps us begin to understand why the spark occurs. If we take this idea further- with the compatibility triangle in perspective- we will see even more how the void and the spark relate.

We can think of our void as a shape. Some people's void is a simple shape and others have voids with complex shapes. Whether our void shape is simple or complex is determined as the void shape is formed. Our shape forms from our childhood through our young adult years. Shapes depend on

how we are raised and in what environment we surround ourselves. As we age and seek a partner, the impact of our family and social life will have been a major factor in the design of our void shape. Some individuals might have grown up in a less nurturing household and thus, they may have more needs than the person that was lavished with tenderness and care. However, our individual personalities also play a significant role in how we react to the situations we are put in. Based on this, we see that there are some needs we have more control over than others.

Speaking of the void and how it forms over time- based on our environment and upbringing- we find that there are *general needs* and *individual needs*. An example of a general need is social interaction. It has been shown that if a person is isolated, he/she will literally go mad or insane. One of the worst forms of punishment is solitary confinement, because of the psychological and emotional strain it puts a person through. From this we see that a general need of people everywhere is that of social interaction, just as food and water are general physical needs. Although a need may be general, the strength of that need may be strong or weak, depending upon the person. In this example, a person's individual need may be filled by very limited social contact, whereas, it takes a greater amount to fulfill someone else's social interaction need. This helps us understand the difference between general needs and individual needs. Individual needs may be thought of as sub-general needs; needs that are unique to a certain person. These individual needs are just as important as general needs, yet they are not universal.

In this philosophy there are four areas of the void. These groups are based on general needs, yet, it can easily be seen how individual needs vary in each group. The four areas where we seek to be balanced or have our lackings/needs fulfilled are: Emotional, Characteristic/ Personality, Spiritual, and Intellectual. Let's briefly talk about each.

Emotional Needs Met- everyone has emotions and feelings, and attached to these are needs. Some examples of these needs would be to feel important, to be listened to, cherished, thought about, cared for, loved, wanted, etc. Of course the depth and area of these needs will be different for each individual, but the general requirement of having our emotional needs met, whatever they may be, is very apparent.

Characteristic/Personality Balanced- this has to do with the Indian myth. Each of us develops our personality through a variety of means. When a couple "looks good together," it has less to do with physical appearance,

than with the way they interact. The balance that they find is what makes them stand out. Here the two halves have become one.

Spiritual Strengthening~ some people might disagree that there are spiritual needs. However, this need has quite a bit of substance to it because the term used here has a broad meaning. Spiritual strengthening encompasses not only spiritual or religious aspects, but the ideologies, principles, values, and morals of an individual. It is these constructive doctrines that people have a need to be encouraged to pursue. This is the foundation of who a person is and the need is to have it reinforced.

Intellectual Stimulation~ the need to learn, think and rationalize is ever present. No matter at what level a person is intellectually, if they are not exercising their brain capacity, their mind will atrophy; just as an unused muscle. This learning is not just amassing information, but cultivating wisdom and being able to execute decision-making skills. This need is not only brought about by the world we live in, but on the base level of survival itself.

Now that we've noted the differences between individual and general needs, and focused specifically on the four that are contained within the void, let's turn our attention to how these needs interrelate to the void. Whether our void shape is simple or complex, over time the shape will change. The basic shape will remain, but a side might expand or retract, smooth out or become rough. Our void shape may also make a new corridor or branch out. The shape shifting that takes place has to do with the natural occurrence of the dominant and recessive nature of our needs. Also, since the void is our lackings and needs, how well we understand these deficiencies will help the shapes' stability.

What is meant by *dominant needs* are needs that have taken precedence over other needs or is at that particular time the need that is demanding to be fulfilled first. The *recessive needs* are those needs that have taken a secondary position to the current dominant need(s) of the time. Both dominant and recessive needs are based on timing in relationship to our current surroundings/situations. The above mentioned general and individual needs, at any given time, may be dominant or recessive. There is no hierarchy of these needs. Some may have a tendency to be more assertive than others during a certain age or for a given group of people, but

they are not set on any chart.

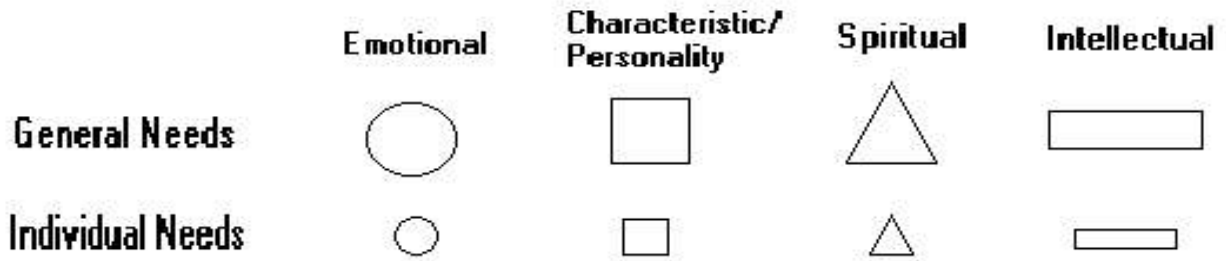
The nature of our needs is that they fluctuate back and forth, some being dominant and others recessive. This is not to say that because a need is dominant that it will always be dominant. The same is true of recessive needs. Also, just because a need is recessive, doesn't mean that it is somehow smaller than the current dominant need. Indeed, a dominant need may be very small, while a recessive need is vast. But the very fact that at that time this small need is dominant, shows how much power it has over us by demanding to be fulfilled first; even before that of the larger need.

Yet, if you want to think of the void as simply our needs, you must realize that we often mistake our wants for our needs. This confusion impacts what the void shape looks like at any given time. For example, a person thinks that they really need something in their companion that is actually a want. This want is incorporated into the void shape as a nonuniform appendix. The resulting shape becomes uneven and disproportionate. Because the void shape has been complicated, it is now more difficult to find someone to meet this false need.

It may sound like what is desirable is to have the simplest shape possible, but this is not so. Although our void shape may change somewhat over time, it remains relatively the same, even with dominant and recessive needs in play. If you took someone's natural shape at any given time it would be roughly uniform. A person with a simple shaped void is only someone who has mostly general needs. The person with a complex void shape has more individual needs, which has compounded the simple shape into a complex shape. This is not inferring that this person is needy and therefore, somehow worse off than the individual with the simple shape; only that they have different individual needs. All true needs, whether general or individual, have a basic design. The dominant and recessive needs will have an effect on the shape, but only in the driving force of the dominant need of the time. This differs greatly from having our roughly uniform void shape (our needs) disfigured by an unnatural nonbasic design (our wants).

Here is an example that may be helpful. Let us imagine a simple and complex shaped void. In this example we will make general needs large and individual needs small, although, this ratio may not always be the case. Needs are drawn as basic shapes. Each of the four areas can be thought of as a different basic shape. The needs, as represented in our example, are as follows: Emotional- Circles; Spiritual- Triangles; Characteristic/Personality- Squares; Intellectual-Rectangles. Dominant need(s) will be black, demanding to be fulfilled first, and recessive needs will be white, waiting for the dominant need(s) to be fulfilled. Or, given time- based on circumstances- the dominant need(s) will become recessive and one of the other recessive needs will become dominant.

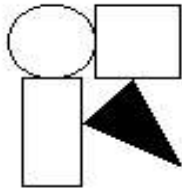
# Void Shapes



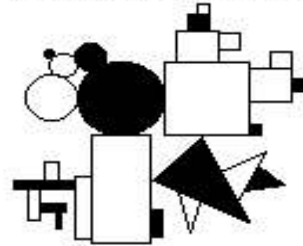
**Dominant Need- Black**

**Recessive Need- White**

## Simple Shape



## Complex Shape



In the Simple Shape diagram we see the four general needs of the void; which we all possess. The spiritual need is currently dominant. In the Complex Shape we find individual needs branching off of the general needs. Here there are a number of dominant needs competing for supremacy. The complex shape may seem overwhelming and almost impossible to fulfill, but this is not the case. First, since everyone has these four general needs, almost anyone can meet them, although to what percentage goes back to our compatibility triangle. Then along this same line of thinking, our individual needs also fall within each of these four groups. So it again depends on how high a percentage we are compatible with someone, not whether our individual needs can be met. It's also important to remember, a person's intellectual needs are not going to be filled by someone's personality, because the shapes don't fit. However, this is exactly the problem with wants. They don't fit the basic shapes or our needs.

Think of a child playing with a box that has basic shapes cut out of it. They are trying to fit the correct shape into the right slot. When they find the correct slot, the shape falls through. This would be like having a certain need completely filled. Two people at 100% compatibility would be like all the pieces being put into the correct slots. Sometimes the child will take other

toys and try to shove them into the slots in the box. Although they don't fit the reason the child doesn't give up right away is because the foreign toy partly fits into the hole. This is much like confusing our wants with our needs.

In this diagram, the nonbasic shapes of our wants conflict strongly with the basic shapes of our needs. It has now become much more difficult to fulfill the needs of a person because they are mistaking their wants for their needs. Also, notice how many more dominant wants there are than dominant needs. In most cases a person's wants tend to over shadow their needs. This is because the very nature of a want tends to be dominant.

You can think about this in comparison with the physical need for food. A person needs food and water to live. Nevertheless, a person can live on a very unnutritious diet. In the early days of exploration scurvy was a disease that was present on many sailing journeys. Although the sailors were eating, their diet consisted of salted meat and hard biscuits. Their body would crave vegetables and fruit, because they weren't getting enough vitamin C. This craving would be like a dominate need. Wants would be to the void shape as drugs are to an addict. The body needs food, yet the person wants the drugs, even over the need of life sustaining food. Because the addict mistakes this want as a need they look to get the fix.

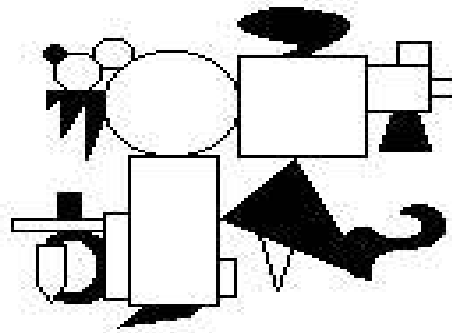
In the very process of confusing our wants with our needs, some people may feel that it is impossible not to act on our wants when we mistake them for our needs. Yet, it is important for us to try to identify what are truly our needs and what are just our wants. The reason for this is so that we will be more likely to find someone at the highest possible compatibility percentage. By knowing what a need is, we can distinguish it from a want.

**Need:** the lack of something requisite or necessary; a condition requiring supply or relief.

**Want:** to desire that which is not requisite; optional, wish or hope.

## Void Shapes

### Wants confused for needs



The 'something' which is referred to in the definition of a need would be one of the four general needs: emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and/or characteristic/personality. Again, individual needs would fall into each of these groups. Still, how do we differentiate between a need and a want? As defined, a want is not requisite. This characteristic is where a person will find out what their needs are. If we do not eat we begin to starve and we see the signs of this in our health. The same will become apparent in a relationship. If a need is not being met, a person will say those dreaded words, "we need to talk." Even in this phrase, the word need appears. This usually happens because someone's needs are not being met.

However, our example is only based on a relationship, where when needs aren't fulfilled, we see the problem quite obviously. What about in the absence of a relationship? How do we pinpoint our needs then? This is done by taking our mental lists, and going down point by point, trying to decipher the importance of each item. If the item is not met in a relationship, would it have a negative effect on you? During this "in betweenness," when we are not attached to someone or pursuing an individual, we are independent. This allows the void to be neutral. This neutrality is based on the fact that we are neither giving nor receiving, but only seeking. It is during this seeking period that dominant and recessive needs fluctuate, and we have the time to identify our wants.

One other note that is worth mentioning is that of one-sided giving. Since both sides in a relationship must give and take, a balanced equality is of importance. Because our dominant needs continue to trade places with our recessive needs even in a relationship, although far less often, both sides need to be growing together to meet each other's needs. Therefore, we need to avoid being parasitic in our relationships and seek out symbiosis.

## Section IV:

### The Essence of the Spark

Digesting the void can be quite a task, so before we answer the spark questions, let us recall just what the spark is. The spark is the triggering or stirring of the romantic interest one individual has for another of the opposite sex; the movement or elevation from the associative or friendship level to that of the romantic interest level. Having defined what the spark is, we sought to find its substance by asking a series of questions that dealt with its essence. Let us examine these questions:

\*What are the attribute(s) of the spark?

Since the spark is the movement from the associative/friendship level to that of the romantic interest level, it is reasonable to conclude that the attributes of the spark may be many things. We saw the reason for why the spark exists, as being the void, and there noted several attributes of the spark. Some of those being needs (emotional, spiritual, personality, intellectual), others may be timing and even physical appearance. These things are all attributes or connected to the spark.

\*Does the spark grow?

The spark itself does not grow. It is only the triggering action. However, the romantic interest can grow. This is due to the realization that a person's void is being more completely fulfilled with one individual, than with another. This is the difference between just a fling and something that lasts; both parties experience a growth of romantic interest.

\*How long does the spark last?

The spark's period of duration depends on each individual. At one time it may be very short, yet at another, it may be long. This length not only has to do with the person, but for each individual that triggers the spark for them. You might meet two people that trigger the spark for you, although with one, the spark might be like a flash, but the other seems like a snowball rolling down a hill, starting fast then picking up speed. On the other hand, for someone else, the same two people might spark their interest in just the opposite way.

\*Does the spark burn out?

The spark does not burn out. It is only the movement that takes place to bring a person to the romantic interest level. Once there, the romantic interest can grow or burn out.

\*Does the spark lead to love?

The spark does not lead to love. Again, it is only the triggering or stirring of the romantic interest. However, once there, the romantic interest may or may not lead to love.

\*Can the spark exist in magnitudes?

The spark can indeed exist in greater magnitudes. Since we know that we have multiple needs, it is reasonable to conclude that if someone meets our dominant need(s) of the time that the spark might be like an explosion. Although someone else might meet a recessive need and then, as we get to know them, we realize that they meet more of our needs. In this case the spark is small and long.

\*Is the spark subjective and/or variable?

Yes, the spark is variable and subjective. The variable part comes from our individual needs and the subjective part comes from our wants. Our individual interpretation projected on many people determines whether we think a person will meet our mental check list; this is extremely subjective. Also since we have dominant and recessive needs that vary through time, the spark will vary for different people.

\*Can someone's spark ignite someone else's spark?

The spark can have a chain reaction for igniting someone else's interest in us. When we realize that someone has a romantic interest in us, we respond more positively to them. This is not the case in all instances, but many times someone else's spark triggers our own spark for them. Being liked has a powerful influence on us.

\*Can the spark be engaged? How?

Yes, we mentioned one way by answering the last question. However, we are also constantly trying to get other people to notice us. We do this by

displaying our best side or playing to someone's needs. In these ways, we manipulate ourselves so that we may ignite the spark in other people. But there are some aspects of the spark that are outside our control to manipulate. Plus, since the spark only takes us to the romantic interest level, if we are not filling the other person's void it will become evident, and the interest may die out.

\*Is the spark a cultural phenomenon?

The notion that the spark could be a cultural phenomenon is a very interesting idea. In countries where arranged marriages take place how does the spark occur? It would seem that the spark doesn't matter; the variable of attraction is dependant on the parents, who seek the ideal companion for their offspring. However, the spark may still occur at the first meeting, yet those getting married rely less on the spark to hopefully lead them to love and marriage, than they do on their parents intuition and wisdom. Thus, it seems possible that the spark is a cultural phenomenon, found in cultures where individuals seek their own mates. However, even in countries where arranged marriages take place, people still can be romantically interested in other individuals without getting married.

The question about how important the spark is will be best answered when we completely understand what causes the spark. For this reason, let us put off probing this question and consider what we have learned so far. Here are some conclusions: the spark does not fill the void; the spark may be many things; the spark does not grow; the spark's duration of time differs from individual to individual; the spark does not burn out, it is only a duration of time, based in an individual and fulfills that period of time, then it is finished; the spark itself does not lead to love; the spark can exist in varying magnitudes; the spark is variable and subjective; someone's spark may ignite our spark; we may manipulate ourselves to engage the spark in other people; the spark may be a cultural phenomenon.

From what we have learned, there seems to be something missing. The idea that the spark can be manipulated or vary from culture to culture, combined with the notion of the spark being variable/subjective and existing in many magnitudes, makes the spark seem broader and deeper than we at first considered. This insight is one of the biggest break throughs in understanding the spark. We have been talking about *the* spark, as being one thing. Part of this misconception comes from our mental list, in which we conclude that people that meet more of our criteria are those people that

we will be romantically interested in. We have been approaching this with the hope of discovering the one thing that causes the spark. Yet a huge revelation comes when we realize that there are certain types or groups of sparks. These being Biological, Cultural/Manipulated, and Natural Sparks.

## Section V:

### The Three Types of Sparks

The uncovering of the different types of sparks is extremely significant. These sparks are the key to understanding this philosophy. Let us thoroughly examine each kind of spark.

**Biological Sparks**~ It may seem that the biological spark is the only kind of spark there is. However, the biological spark cannot answer for the void. This spark is most interesting because it is entirely self contained. Just as the name implies, this spark is completely biological, meaning that it is our biology (i.e. our hormones) which propel us to seek a mate for reproduction. The animal kingdom thrives because of this spark. In fact, the human population exists because of this spark. However, this is strictly a base spark and is one that is inherent in all of us. Also, since anyone of the opposite sex could meet the demands of the biological spark or reproduction, physical appearance is not a part of this spark, although, it is linked to it. We each inherit traits from our genetic father and mother which determines the way we look. Nevertheless, we manipulate our appearance to meet the culture and time we live in. Because of this, physical appearance falls into the cultural/manipulated spark. The only link biologically is that of the physical traits we inherit from our parents. The biological spark is extremely important for reproduction purposes, but it only goes that far

**Natural Sparks**~ These sparks are essentially the sparks that fire for someone who fills our void. Since the void is a natural occurrence in us, the person that meets these needs are who they naturally are. Hence the title natural sparks. These sparks usually occur after or while getting to know someone. This is because they are not superficial sparks, but very deep and strong. We have to be careful with this though, because of our mistaking our wants for our needs, or just desired wants more than needs. When we do this, the natural sparks that we think we feel are not really natural sparks, because they won't fill our void. Just as we feel hungry when we are not eating, we will feel our needs not being meet when we mistake them for our wants. Natural sparks only are genuine when they fill our void, otherwise they fall into the cultural/manipulated category. People who seek this kind of spark will have the highest likelihood of finding a lasting relationship.

Cultural/Manipulated Sparks- These are the things we do to spark the interest of others. Physical appearance falls into this category. We constantly manipulate our appearance to draw others to us, whether in our dress, hair style, speech, etc. However, this manipulation varies from culture to culture. Each culture has its own guidelines of what a physically appealing individual should look like and how they should act. Also, every culture stresses certain physical attributes as sign of youth and beauty. Because of this, physical attraction is a cultural/manipulated spark. Another aspect of this, besides that of physical appearance, is that of our personalities. From culture to culture we try to meet the expectations or ideals of how we should act. There are even those that manipulate themselves to imitate what others desire, just to gain their interest. We might call this person a player- someone who manipulates themselves to gain the favor of others.

If we try to simplify what these groups of sparks are, we would come up with the following: a biological spark are our hormones, which propels us to reproduce; cultural/manipulated sparks would be our wants, those things not requisite; and, natural sparks would be our needs, those things that fulfill our void. Since we spent a great deal of time on our needs, let us now consider our wants. We will refer to these as our preferences.

## Section VI: Preferences

Preferences have connection to the cultural/manipulated spark or our wants. A person develops preferences from childhood on. Preferences are influenced by our upbringing and our culture. There are *positive preferences* and *negative preferences*; things we seek in others and things which repel us in others. Preferences range from how a person acts to what they wear, to things that they enjoy doing to how they appear physically. Since our preferences are essentially what we desire, and we often mistake our wants for our needs, it is important to understand the difference between the two. Let us spend our time focusing on the aspects of people's positive preferences for others, as far as physical attraction is concerned.

First, physical appearance preferences are based in the culture and time that a person lives in. Some people have very strict preferences for what they find physically attractive and what they dislike. Others have very few preferences and find many people attractive. An individual might prefer people with a certain eye or hair color, or a particular height or weight. These attributes are more obvious than most. However, we also have preferences to the shape of a head, cheek bone structure, nose size, chin shape, forehead length, lip thickness, etc. Many of these features are unrealized when we see someone for the first time, but it is all processed in an instant and comes together in a package as the human form.

This explains why we find some people good looking, because they meet a few of our preferences, and others extremely good looking, because they meet more of our preferences. This is also the reason why someone may be attractive, yet, we are not attracted to them. They may meet the cultural standard, but not our individual preferences. Also, all of these principles about preferences apply to the way others behave and the things they like to do.

One final aspect of physical beauty that bridges cultures, is that of physical symmetry. If we took what many different cultures considered to be the most beautiful and compared them, we would find many differences. However, the similarity would be in their symmetrical faces and bodies. This is one area that we all tend to lean towards when looking at the outward appearance of people: physical symmetry.

Since the void is connected to natural sparks and our preferences are connected to cultural/manipulated sparks, we can more clearly define what

attributes the spark is. We mentioned that it could be many things, but after having grouped the different sparks we are left with only two factors. Those two elements are timing and proximity. Both our wants and our needs are subject to these variables.

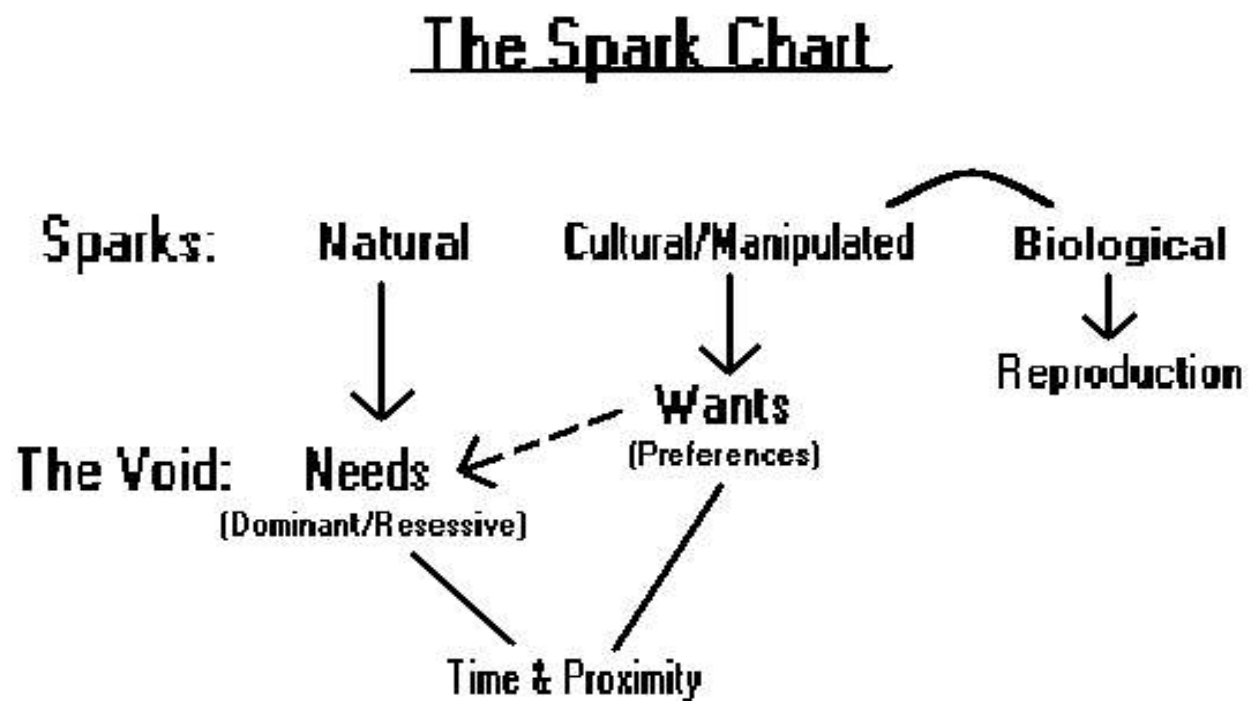
*Timing* is based on the moment when two people meet. In our comings and goings we constantly have the opportunity to meet new people. Timing comes into play when our time line crosses paths with someone else's time line. At certain times we plan these meetings, such as when we schedule appointments. However, timing in this philosophy is an unknown variable, because we don't know the moments when we are going to come into contact with someone that we are romantically interested in. The reason it's so exciting to meet someone you are romantically interested in, is because of the unknown nature of timing. Not being in control of timing is what gives the spark its flare. Note too that timing and proximity perpetually affect one another.

*Proximity* is simply geographic nearness, yet it is very important as a predictor of who we will have any of the sparks for. A familiar saying goes, "there are plenty of fish in the sea," which may be the case and although our global community is continually shrinking, the likelihood of the people you will have a romantic interest in are those in close proximity to you. The reason that proximity is so important, is because of the greater availability of those we often meet. Another reason for us having romantic interest for those close to us, is that of repeated exposure to new stimuli, which increases our liking for them. This phenomenon has been exploited by advertisers and is known as the *mere exposure effect*. Within certain limits, familiarity breeds fondness.

Now that we have probed the many aspects of this philosophy in our search for what causes the spark or the reason for why we are romantically interested in the people we are, let us put everything we have learned together. As we do this, we will be able to use the knowledge we have gained in each of these areas to realize why it is we are romantically interested in certain people, and whether or not it will lead us to love.

Section VII:  
Links and Relationships

We have discussed many different aspect in this essay: the spark, the void, dominant and recessive needs, wants/preferences, the types of sparks, etc. It may seem very complex, and it is, but if we look at it in a whole, the process of what causes us to move from the friendship/association level to that of the romantic interest level becomes observable. Let us examine a chart that illustrates the links and relationships between the many different aspects of the spark. This diagram is known as the Spark Chart.



This diagram is based on a tear or step system. To see the links and relationships a person would start on the top and work their way down the chart. A line with an arrow shows progression. A solid line between two aspects demonstrates a link, but there is no movement, only the two aspects are attached or affect one another. The dashed line between needs and wants is to illustrate that there is movement between the two but that it is confused.

For an individual to understand why they are romantically interested in a person, they first must identify what spark has been triggered. Upon most initial encounters the first thing that people see is physical appearance, which may cause us to be romantically interested. This would be a cultural/manipulated spark. Most of the time we do not pursue these interests, because they happen quite often in many different circumstances. If we are physically attracted to someone, it has been triggered because of our wants or preferences. This is also a factor of timing and proximity. Although cultural/manipulated sparks are often superficial, they can at times lead us to get to know a person better. Getting to know a person, may in turn, ignite a natural spark. Also, note that cultural/manipulated sparks are linked to the biological spark, and when these sparks occur together the relationship is usually brief. This explains one-night stands and short term relationships.

If a person feels a natural spark it could be triggered for one of two reasons. First, if it is a genuine natural spark, it will have been triggered by our void which is based on dominant and recessive needs. However, a natural spark may also have occurred, because we mistook our wants for our needs, and so we have fooled ourselves into believing that that person will fulfill our void. When this fraudulent natural spark occurs, it is really a cultural/manipulated spark that has been triggered. This is based on the fact that the reason we are romantically interested in that person is because of our wants or preferences. Either way both needs and wants are subject to timing and proximity. We cannot escape these two factors.

Seeing these kinds of relationships we can understand why some sparks may exist in greater magnitudes. Not only is it due to the fact that if someone meets more of our needs the spark will be bigger, but also we may have more than one spark trigger at the same time. Also, if a spark has been triggered, we may be romantically interested in that person, but if they don't reciprocate that interest may diminish. The spark has still been triggered and later on we may see that person again and feel that interest rekindled. The spark has not been triggered anew, but we are remembering the initial spark as an echo. Or, one of the other sparks has ignited for them. Thus, the romantic interest seems stronger than before.

Now that we understand the spark and all of its aspects in relationship to each other, we can move on to probably the most relevant issue of this philosophy: how important is the spark.

## Section VIII:

### How Important is the Spark?

The idea that the spark may not be important at all, perhaps is a very shocking idea. However, now that we know that there are different kinds of sparks it is very reasonable to try and judge their value. The importance of the spark is not the real question, because it is subjective. The real question is how important is the spark to you? The value of the spark is dependant on how much each person places in it. We will examine each spark to see how essential it may be, but it remains up to the individual how they will implement this knowledge in his/her life.

Since people have different value systems, to be able to say how important each spark is, we must have an end result to compare it to, in order to derive the sparks worth. Let us begin by looking at the biological spark. When we first introduced the biological spark it was mentioned that it was interesting because it was self contained. This means that it does not take another person to ignite this spark, but that it is internally triggered. Our hormones propel us to seek out a mate for reproduction. Obviously if reproduction is the end result of the biological spark, then we have to consider its importance on a biological level. We owe our existence to this moving force. If it is important for us to reproduce, than the biological spark would be the most sought after spark. However, this spark is solely based in nature and since anyone can meet the fairly simple biological needs of another person of the opposite sex, then we all should be happy in just seeking out a mate for reproduction. Yet, we started off by talking about love, which is strictly a human emotion. If love is our objective, we must look towards one of the other sparks to get us there, because the biological spark can't.

In defining what love is, we restricted our definition to an intense feeling of deep affection for someone of the opposite sex. If we esteem this kind of *companionship love*, rather than physical intimacy or *passionate love*, we would be wise to invest our time in finding people that trigger in us the natural spark. However, many cultures place tremendous emphasis on cultural/manipulated sparks. If a person isn't seeking to reproduce, but they are seeking passionate love, then their wants are going to be more important to them than their needs. Therefore, they will look to satisfy their preferences rather than fulfilling their needs. We can see how important cultural/manipulated sparks are to a culture by how much they stress passionate love over companionship love. Studies have show that cultures

which emphasize companionship love over passionate love have lower divorce rates.

This isn't to say that our wants are bad, but they aren't as critical as many may think. We can see too, why if two people meet our needs and one fills more of our preferences than the other, we will be attracted to that individual more than the other. The value of sparks should be to have our needs met first, then to seek out are wants.

Yet, there are many people that have the mind set that they *are* seeking companionship love and although they may agree that we manipulate ourselves culturally- both in the way we look and how we act- they still need to be physically attracted to a person to be romantically interested in them. But if we examine what causes us to have natural sparks, we see that it is our void and physical appearance is not a need; if it is not met we do not regress. This is where many people get their wants confused with their needs.

They find someone that meets all of their preferences and they think that they will be happy with them, but they soon realize that their void is not being fulfilled. Also, if we take into consideration the mere exposure effect, we find that people who we feel a natural spark for and that are filling our void, tend to become attractive to us. As we see someone again and again, their physical imperfections grow less noticeable and their attractiveness grows more apparent. The prince, in Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella*, captures the essence of this idea, when he said, "Do I love you because you're beautiful, or are you beautiful because I love you?"

As we seek natural sparks we will hope to find those that we will be most compatible with. Understanding our void will allow us a better opportunity of having our needs met because we will be able to distinguish them from our wants. As we do this, we will stabilize our void shape and in so doing, our dominant needs will be less likely to change. This will bring us to a position in which we can find those people that will fill our void first and then also, meet many of our preferences as well. Shakespeare once said, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, "Love looks not with eyes, but with the mind."

Understanding why we are romantically interested in the people we are has been a long journey and in the process you have become more accountable. Knowing about the spark is a bit like understanding the laws of the land. Meaning you can't sin in ignorance or in other words, you should now be able to avoid some heartache and find more meaningful relationships. This philosophy is as any other, just words on a paper, but hopefully it has given you some insight, which will allow you to evaluate yourself and move in positive directions, as far as seeking out relationships and love goes. Still, some people may feel helpless now knowing about the timing and proximity factors, and the spark may seem to have lost some of

its magic, becoming more mechanical. But don't worry, because in the instant that you become romantically interested in someone, all you'll feel is the wonderful prospect of love. And now, with all that has been said, one question still remains,...who will be the next person to spark your interest?