

prayers are not answered. If one wants to raise birds or grow plants, one will never stop doing so simply because the plants and birds do not reciprocate. To love is the same—one cannot stop loving simply because one's love is not requited." Here he contradicts himself. In the beginning of his essay, he claims that love should be conditional; then later on, he apparently advocates unconditional love. That proves that he knows nothing about love and takes love too lightly. Human beings are not gods, Buddhas, plants, or birds. A human being has a mind that thinks, and a sense of dignity. A human being cannot be manipulated. How can we compare a human being with senseless clay or wooden sculptures? Love involves two parties and cannot be coerced. Otherwise, it is disrespectful to the other person's dignity and thus disrespectful to one's own dignity!

"Flirting"<sup>1</sup> is a special term used to describe the brazen dalliances of hypocritical parasites, a behavior that is denounced by society as immoral. But this gentleman takes this kind of behavior as "love." He says, "We know that in society there are some young men and women who try to seduce the opposite sex by wearing fancy clothing and using specially rehearsed language. That is what people call 'flirting.' But wealth, fame, erudition, and personality could also seduce people. So I can conclude that 'flirting' is nothing but a bad name a few old moralists and intellectuals gave to the proletarian underdog's expression of love." In reality, the true, uneducated proletarians have to work from morning till night and hardly have time for the game of "flirting." Hiding under the flag of the proletariat, this gentleman openly advocates "flirting" and insults not only knowledge, reputation, and personality but also the uncorrupted proletariat. His writing, originally meant to be published in one of those trashy magazines, now serves to show the true colors of those who occasionally call themselves socialists, thus thoroughly disheartening those who had regarded him as a friend. I, for one, would never have imagined that he could fall so low. We have been forced to coin the term "Neo-hooliganism," which, I hope, can serve as a good warning. We young people should guard against words and actions that would place us into this category. We should all support the New Culture Movement. One needs to refresh one's thinking constantly. The old social tradition dies hard and constantly tries to pull us back with its evil claws. Therefore, it is unavoidable for us to make mistakes, and we are seldom aware of those mistakes we

ourselves make. We should wholeheartedly welcome anyone with clearer vision who is willing to guide us; otherwise, we could easily destroy our bright future with our egotistical oversight.

Nowadays, there are some who appear to be activists, but who, in reality, often encumber and encroach upon the human rights of others. Instead of examining their own behavior, they slander and defame others. They should certainly lose their right to free speech. Freedom of speech should not impede others' right to freedom. Freedom should go hand in hand with responsibility, and anyone who pursues freedom should be aware of this. The last thing we need is to have people who refuse to correct their own mistakes and try to entice others into returning to the old path under a brand new name. There is no room in our society for those who fervently advocate indulgence in animalistic desire, resort to highhandedness, and hinder the freedom of others. I truly hope that those who do this will mend their ways and try to be good members of our new society; otherwise, they will either lose their right to speak to the public or surrender to the reactionary forces. Such a demonstration of weakness would be a profound misfortune indeed!

#### Note

1. The original Chinese term *diaobangzi*, (literally, "hanging your arm out") has a much more negative connotation than the English term "flirting."

## 11 My View on the Issue of Divorce

Yang Zhihua (July 25, 1922)

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There are so many people in the world, but there are no two people who share exactly the same natural inclinations. Each person has different strengths and weaknesses. Some like to move around; others like to stay put; some like food; others like clothing; some like to

study; others like to do other things. Furthermore, there are differences even among those who like to move around and among those who like to stay put. And among those who like to study, some prefer to study literature, whereas others prefer to study science. The same goes with those who like to do other things. People's character, thinking, will, and behavior are all different, even though some might have a few things in common. On top of that, there are only one or two out of a thousand who even have a few things in common. It is no wonder that there are often conflicts between human beings!

Love, whether between friends, siblings, or husband and wife, may eventually turn problematic, and that leads to mutual dissatisfaction and eventually a breakup. It is relatively easy to break up with your friends or siblings, but because of the intimacy of marriage, it is more difficult to break up with your spouse. Divorce is a truly a delicate issue.

In our society today, there are quite a few people who believe that they are practicing what we call "free love." But the question whether they are indeed in love with each other remains. If people do not marry out of true love, what difference is there between their marriage and those arranged or coerced marriages? There should not be the slightest doubt that couples are allowed to divorce if their marriage was not freely willed or if it is lacking in true love. In my opinion, even couples who originally married out of true love should be allowed to divorce. To force an estranged couple to share the same bedroom would only cause immoral and unnatural behavior. How love begins and ends is beyond our control and comprehension. Love is like life itself—to lose one's love is to lose one's life. We see so many men in society who visit brothels or obtain concubines because they do not love their wives. But we women can only lead a lonely, sad, and painful life if we do not love our husbands. How many women are there who are numbed or die because of their husbands and their unhappy marriages! Because of traditional morality, it is unthinkable for those who survive to demand a divorce. Those women may commit adultery; but what fun is that?! Thus, it is much better to just get a divorce. They should try to rely on their own strength, but society should also lend them a helping hand.

I have stated that people have different inclinations, and that these differences may produce disagreements and even mutual resentment between husbands and wives. Even those whose love is free, natural,

and long-standing go through some rough times. In the beginning, courting or married couples tend to demonstrate their similarities rather than their differences. Consequently, their love becomes more and more passionate, thus rendering them unable to see each other's shortcomings; meanwhile, others may see the potential problems but not be in a position to interfere. This is usually the root cause of a broken relationship. If the love of a courting couple is true, natural, sustained, and based on mutual observation, however, their marriage is more likely to survive the shortcomings revealed afterward, because the couple will probably understand and forgive each other. This kind of marriage may last longer than those based on a love that is superficial, not entirely free and natural, and lacking in a long period of mutual observation. Nonetheless, though this kind of marriage may not be so fragile, it may still last only a bit longer than other marriages. I think that a couple should simply divorce, when their marriage can no longer last.

If divorce is the result of dissatisfaction, then the intention of divorce is to seek satisfaction. But does seeking satisfaction mean seeking another love? If so, can one be assured that the new love is satisfactory? Most likely not! As I said earlier, people have different experiences, worldviews, ways of thinking, and behavior. So their relationship may fall apart despite their passionate love. The second marriage or relationship may fall apart even more easily than the first one. Therefore, I think it is not necessary to have another love or marriage after divorce. It matters little even if one lacks financial independence; as long as one has good health, there will always be life. All of us have our own natural strength; why should one rely on other people and suffer?

## 12 The New Year's Sacrifice

Lu Xun (February 7, 1924)

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When you come right down to it, the windup of the old Lunar Year