Love and Limerence: The Experience of Being in Love by Dorothy Tennov

Do not let the title fool you; this book is not a tale of romantic fiction, but a fascinating psychological exploration into one of humanities deepest and most powerful emotions. Tennov presents a the theory of limerence, which she describes as a state of obsession, with the desire of reciprocation of love or limerence from the person who they are limerent for, called the Limerent Object, or LO. She does however state that this is only one type of romantic relationship, and that not all people experience this condition.

Using a variety of anecdotes and case studies, she explores trends and patterns in relationships and experiences of what is considered a romantic relationship. She does not suggest that limerence is required to love, but a state in which one loves another to excess, even obsession. She contrasts this with the opposite state, nonlimerence, and the implications of the various types of relationships that may arise from this. Nonlimerence may indeed involve a loving relationship between two individuals, which she classifies as affectionate bonding, which doesn’t involved the obsessive desire for their partner, and the need for the love to be reciprocated.

It explores the origins of her desire to explore one of humanities most powerful emotions, and questions why such an innate and prominent topic is often avoided in the scientific community. Through her countless interviews, the stories provide an even greater insight into the experience explored. Some can be related to, others border on the absurd to obsessive, by each helps paints the picture that she articulates throughout the entire text.

She provides insight into the effects of limerence on people who are limerent and the effect on the LO, she explores its effects in society, in the arts and literature. She explores both the positive and negative effects of limerence, and the roller coaster of emotions from moments of pure ecstasy to utter despair, and how love can be the most pleasurable biological experience known to man, and yet cause some to consider suicide. It also explores why limerence may occur, and possible evolutionary advantages to one of the most powerful human experience.

This book only scratches the surface on such a universal and human emotion, and does pose more questions than it answers. However, even though that is the case, the book is an essential read for anyone interested in psychology and the human condition. It provides a fascinating and yet scientific insight into what was one uncharted territory in the field of psychology. If one wishes to try and understand one of the most difficult, yet innate emotions, then this book provides a small insight into the previously uncharted territory. Once read, one can better understand the emotions of their family, friends and society around them, and understand what it means to be truly human.

**Rating:** 4/5