

"Most mothers are capable of giving "milk", but only a minority of giving "honey too".

Erich Fromm, 'Chapter 2: The Theory of Love,' The Art of Loving

"Motherly love... is an unconditional affirmation of the child's life and his needs. But one important addition to this description must be made here. Affirmation of the child's life has two aspects; one is the care and responsibility absolutely necessary for the preservation of the child's life and his growth. The other aspect goes further than mere preservation. It is the attitude which instills in the child a love for living, which gives him the feeling: it is good to be alive, it is good to be a little boy or girl, it is good to be on this earth! These two aspects of motherly love are expressed very succinctly in the Biblical story of creation. God creates the world, and man. This corresponds to the simple care and affirmation of existence. But God goes beyond this minimum requirement. On each day after nature—and man—is created, God says: "It is good." Motherly love, in this second step, makes the child feel: it is good to have been born; it instills in the child the love for life, and not only the wish to remain alive. The same idea may be taken to be expressed in another Biblical symbolism. The promised land (land is always a mother symbol) is described as 'flowing with milk and honey.'

LOVE: MILK + HONEY + HAPPINESS

Milk is the symbol of the first aspect of love, that of care and affirmation. Honey symbolizes the sweetness of life, the love for it and the happiness of being alive. Most mothers are capable of giving 'milk,' but only a minority of giving 'honey' too. In order to be able to give honey, a mother must not only be a 'good mother,' but a happy person—and this aim is not achieved by many. The effect on the child can hardly be exaggerated. Mother's love for life is as infectious as her anxiety is. Both have a deep effect on the child's whole personality; one can distinguish, indeed, among children—and adults—those who got only 'milk' and those who got 'milk and honey.'