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Jessica Eller*

*College of DuPage

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Janice Raymond: "The Conditions of Female Friendship"

by Jessica Eller

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In her article "The Conditions of Female Friendship," Janice Raymond gives three specific conditions for female friendship to become a strong bond. The conditions are that a woman must be thoughtful, passionate, and she must also have happiness for a successful and lasting friendship with herself and with others.

Raymond states, "Thinking is a necessary condition of female friendship. The thinking I advocate is better described as thoughtfulness...thoughtfulness is characterized on one hand by the ability to reason and on the other by considerateness and caring" (575). Raymond's view is that women are raised specifically to think about and care for others. This is more directly related to men and children, but can also mean caring for women, too. Women do not have much of a choice, society says that women are supposed to give to others and care about others. Where then is there time for a woman to think about herself? That is where thinking and thoughtfulness come together. In the process of constantly caring for others a woman loses her ability to think. A female friendship combines thinking and thoughtfulness, without one the other is useless.

For female friendship to be sustainable, a woman must be able to think for herself as well be caring, considerate, and respectful to other women. Raymond also says that a woman's best friend is herself. If a woman does not know herself, it may be hard for her to sustain or create a friendship with another woman. The only way for a woman to lose a friendship with herself is to stop thinking. When a woman finds friendship with herself she can no longer be lonely. Any conversation made with oneself may also be made with another person.

Passion is also an important component of a female friendship. According to Raymond, "friendship is a passion but, in my vision, it is a thoughtful passion. It manifests a thinking heart" (pg 557). According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* passion is defined as "Any kind of feeling by which the mind is powerfully affected or moved...An eager outreaching of the mind toward something." People strive to find passion. "A passionate friendship upholds the integrity between thought and passion. In a passionate friendship, there is no separation between the two" (Raymond 577). Passion is part of what makes a woman an individual. In a thoughtfully passionate friendship, two women become their own person. It is important for a woman not to lose herself in the attachment to another woman. Raymond claims passion is associated with relationships between lovers, more than relationships between friends. If a woman is losing herself in a romantic relationship, the friendship is problematic. Raymond warns, also, that romantic relationships between women may be based on lust not love. If a friendship is not grounded, then a romantic relationship will not last.

The basis of Raymond's thoughts on relationships and passion are questionable. What if the passion was between a man and a woman, or between two women, but not romantic? Would Raymond's hypothesis still hold true in heterosexual relationships? Raymond holds a feminist view, she thinks that men rule the world and that women need to fight, and continue fighting, for rights as individuals. This to a certain extent is true, however, history has predominantly shown men and women in romantic relationships; therefore, it should be recognized that women can and will have friendships and loving relationships with men as well as women. Men and women can be passionate towards each other and have strong friendships as well, just as Raymond claims, "One's best friend should be one's lover and one's lover should be one's best friend" (577). There should be thoughtful

passion in any relationship.

Women can also have a long and lasting relationship together that is both thoughtful and passionate without being lovers. For example, I am a well-rounded young woman, and I do not have many friends; however, the friends I do have are very close to me. We are always thinking of and listening to each other, as well as giving and receiving advice. We give hugs; we laugh and cry together. Always being compassionate towards each other and even exchanging words of affection such as “I love you.” We are also passionate towards one another, but we are not lovers.

Raymond talks also about happiness and being “life-glad” as a huge part of a female friendship. Happiness is commonly used or defined as a psychological state. It is a feeling or a state of being that a person experiences. However as this is only one of its meanings, it also has an ethical meaning. It is connected with a person’s moral purpose, found in the achievement of activity, an end, or a life goal. If this is so, then a person, or in this case, a woman can find happiness by finding her life’s purpose. Raymond states “Happiness is striving for the full use of ones powers. It is attained in fulfilling certain ends or purposes. To be happy is a state of existence...to be “life-glad” (580). Raymond tells us that a woman should continually work towards and strive for happiness. It is not something that will find a woman on its own, she must seek it out. The more happiness that is wanted the more there will be to be found. Being “life-glad” means to use all of the wonderful things that life gives you, like the ability to have a solid friendship to your advantage. Raymond states, “A female friendship gives women the ability to be ‘life-glad.’ It makes happiness become a reality, and it provides the encouragement and environment for the full use of ones [friendship] powers” (580). Friendship is a great thing that anyone can have, and when the friendship is made strong, it will benefit each person in it. They will be “life-glad.”

Bibliography

Raymond, Janice. “The Conditions of Female Friendship.” *Quest for Goodness, an Introduction to Ethics*. Ed. Keith W. Krasemann. Needham Heights Massachusetts. Simond and Schuster, 1998. 575-580.