

The Future of Love

(Marty Behrens adapted this from a recorded discussion between Marc Gafni and Ken Wilber about the ISE 2010. Go to www.integrallife.com for more info.)

When I searched the Web looking for links about Love, I found this:

Dynamic MRI's demonstrate that love and emotions are particular neurological responses to stimuli which initiate behavior that enables cooperative activity and reproductive activity which perpetuates genetic information, which is the backbone of evolution. - *How the Mind Works* by Steven Pinker

To be clear, let's agree that this statement is 100% correct. It is also only partial. There is more going on. That is what this discussion is about.

Most of the world understands Love as a mutual agreement pact --- A Deal --- to give each other what we each need. If I know what you want, I can give it to you so that I can then get what I want. There is clearly more to Love than this.

Love is like the positive glue that ties together any relationship – it is fundamental to the creation of what we can call a “We”. This glue is intrinsic to being – to what we are. Whatever the life-force of our universe is, it seems to manifest itself in a way that weaves us together – and Love is the weaver.

There is a universal intelligence that looks right through the eyes of all relationships that are formed. Imagine this as the One True Self. It is witnessing you unfold – it is sitting there in the background. Now, this One True Self comes out through the uniqueness that is you --- this is what we call the Unique Self.

My Unique Self is therefore a concrete thing – something that happens because of that One True Self --- the One True Self is here --- finding its way through me – and through you too. You and I --- our Unique Selves --- come together and there is now a “We” and it is Love that weaves this “We” together.

We expand our sense of self when we connect with another. What is this thing that allows us to feel into another being and empathize with one another – to even expand our sense of self to include one another? Isn't that remarkable? This is love.

Whatever the nature of these woven relationships (family, lovers, friends), this Love is there. But where does it come from? These ties that bind go far beyond what we can explain with words, experiments, and measurements. We are more than a bag of bones, chemicals, and reactions. Third person knowledge – objective, scientific knowledge, is not enough to explain this – this is one of those things that cannot be reduced to Physics. So, what is Love?

Well, I don't how to explain all this without reference to “Spirit”. Without it there is a chasm of loneliness that cannot really be traversed. That which really connects all of us – this is what we sense as Love. We can cooperate and negotiate transactions between us – but that is not the same as empathizing and feeling into the core of another being.

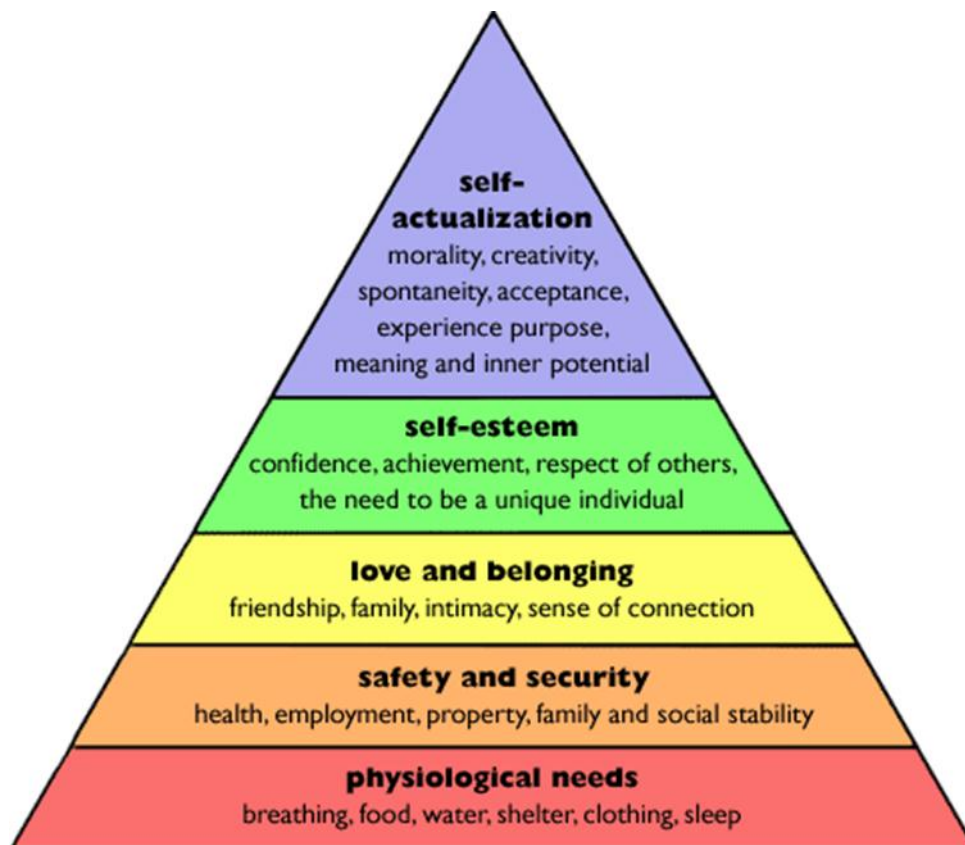
Such negotiated pacts – such deals and strategies for getting what we think we need or what we want – are easier to understand than a more spiritual view on Love – but it is so limited –

and ultimately it is not robust. It is limited to our own Egos getting what we want – and makes the world a very fragile and lonely place.

Science alone cannot explain even the existence of another mind – no less another heart – or Spirit. The One True Self is here looking through my eyes at you and your True Self is back there looking at me. Again, let's recall this worldly expression of your True Self as a "Unique Self".

So here I am, a Unique Self – looking at your Unique Self. This is where the future of Love lives. We often understand Love as being something that comes from outside us. However, it is in fact an awakened capacity for seeing another person deeply – as their Unique Self – even right through to their True Self. So, I will define Love as something that manifests right here between us, right now. And of course, what is happening between us is based on our awareness and our needs. So let's look at that.

Let's take Maslow as a model to discuss awareness and needs. Maslow laid out our growth and development in a fine model. It is Security, Belonging, Self-Esteem, Self-Actualization, and Self-Transcendence.



When you and I come together in relationship from a place where we need to belong and be secure – then we will relate to one another that way. We will do anything to avoid disruption to this belonging and security. But what happens when we step-up to a Love level supported by what Maslow calls Self-Esteem? Here, we start to support one another's self-esteem. That is, I want you to feel good about yourself – and I want you to help me feel good about myself too. This is another kind of Deal. I am still strategizing and negotiating to get my needs meet.

What happens when we move into Self-Actualization? Now, we are loving one another into bringing forth our deepest personal qualities. We are aware that we can help draw out the best in one another at a very high level of self-actualization. But, we are not done. It is still really another negotiation – there is still deal making going on here. So, what is next?

The next step in the Maslow's hierarchy is about self-transcendence. That is, we leave behind our smaller sense of ourselves. This is where the more spiritual nature of Love really comes to fruition. We begin to see that loving one another is part of calling forth a deeper, truer self. This True Self is expressing itself through us – and it is called forth most strongly when we are able to leave behind all of our self-related desires and enjoy the flow of something else through us. It is like we are no longer the lover – we are just the conduit through which the Great Lover loves.

This stage of loving is very different than saying “I love you” and essentially meaning that I am connected to you because you are helping me get something – getting anything like security, belonging, self-esteem, or even self-development.

At this stage, I love you because I can see that deepest One True Self coming through you – when I see your spirit – it is also like a mirror. It is a mirror because that One True Self is really just me, too. This realization is like you and me loving what is really the same thing – that One True Self. This is really a divine realization. We love one another – and we can see that what we are loving is really the same thing, the one thing.

Now, this doesn't mean that we are just the One True Self. It is true that who you pick matters. Each of us is a Unique Self too. We live right here in this world – with perspectives, talents, experiences, visions, baggage, and characteristics that make us unique. So, being with someone who shares and resonates with the characteristics of your Unique Self – this is critical.

You and I are remarkable expressions of One True Self – we are each Unique Selves. When I can find a Unique Self that I resonate with – one who draws out the One True Self through me – this is a new stage of Love. It is a movement beyond that list of the people who give me security and belonging. When we see Spirit in the eyes of the other --- *then* we have the opportunity to coax out that deepest uniqueness in both of us and this is remarkable. If we can recognize our highest selves and invite one another to this greatest common good, then the very nature of Love is realized – and we are transformed.

When we have a realization of Love like this, suddenly there is so much more understanding and acceptance of one another. What starts to drop away is any sense of fear and aggravation that comes from being in relationship with an “other”. When we move on from seeking security, belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization, we are free to Be. We are no longer motivated from feelings of deficiency – we are living and loving out of abundance. It can flow out of us. We can move out of “seeking” and into “being”.

In this space, we resonate in a “We” that is free of fear. Think about this: what is Love in the absence of fear? At such a stage of Love, we move from giving things to one another because we *need* these things and move onto giving one another beautiful things because we can afford it. When we are together, we are able to see that One True Self in a profound way and so it simply flows from us to one another and even to all of the people around us.

This future of Love requires us to see that it is not about us – it is not about our needs – but it is about *being* Love. It is a spaciousness that is full of presence and fullness. This is a Being-ness that is emerging, growing, and rejoicing in what is here between us --- without any reference to “getting” anything at all.

This future of Love calls us to continue to develop as adults. We are now learning to see our grasping and noticing our tendencies to seek things from others. We must challenge ourselves to leave behind the seeking of security, belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization within our relationships. These challenges are not just personal development issues – this is all pointing to a new evolutionary imperative. The future of Love is pointing to a stage of human development that is exciting and quite remarkable. We are all called upon now to learn to Love in a new way.

You are so beautiful
To me
You are so beautiful
To me
Can't you see
You're everything I hoped for
You're everything I need
You are so beautiful
To me

You are so wonderful
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You are so wonderful
To me
Can't you see
You're everything I hoped for
You're everything I need
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