

The Path of Love

A few weeks ago, a friend sent me a short essay on love by Francis Lucille. It struck a deep chord of recognition and prompted some further reflection. What does the path of love involve? Does it refer only to our relationships with other people? Are there any experiments or investigations or practices involved in following the path of love?

First, here is Francis's essay:

What is love?

The word 'love' refers to a lived experience. It is a paradoxical experience because even though we have all experienced the reality of it, it appears to escape every attempt to grasp it, to describe it or to repeat it.

The tender delight we had in our childhood when we looked at a beautiful coloured illustration, the soft emotion when we think about a loved one, the impulse that moves us to encourage a stranger in deep sorrow and to help when in danger, the repulsion that grips us when cruelty is committed against oppressed innocence. All these circumstances among many others point to a common experience that cannot be described or defined.

If we want to go deeper into the discovery of this central experience it seems that our investigation evaporates due to a lack of objective support. If we do not have the words to express it and there are no images to describe it, it is because there are no perceptions or sensations to experience it objectively.

Nevertheless, we do have this experience. That is the paradox: it is unmistakably present. It has the same undeniable and ethereal character as conscious presence. We know this experience in the same way we know that we are conscious.

If we try to describe the trajectory up to the very last moment where it crosses over into the inexpressible, it seems as if the 'I' feeling dissolves, perhaps only temporarily, into a more spacious reality, infinite, a blessed peace that brings an end to all the emotional or intellectual agitation.

We are not strangers to this new dimension. It is not the discovery of a spiritual America. It is immediately recognized as absolute intimacy and tenderness. It is the centre of our self and the world, simultaneously. *This presence is love.*

Is there some particular condition before this quality of authentic love and compassion is revealed?

The condition is the temporary or permanent disappearance of the idea of a separate 'I'. This disappearance can never be the result of an action done by this 'I'. Love flies on its own wings and knows no laws. It is the emergence of grace that wrests us from the hypnosis of separation. Liberation arises out of freedom itself.

But you should not conclude from this that every act and practice intended to establish us as love is useless. Such a decision would confine us to intellectual dullness. The longing for love comes from love itself, not from the separate ego. On the contrary, we have to surrender to everything that takes us to love. In this surrender we discover true life, the inner peace that we have always sought.

Can love exist without an object?

Love exists only without an object. Love is the love of the objectless by the objectless. An object puts clothes on love, and dressed veils it.

What we love in a person is neither the physical body nor the thoughts. It is the conscious presence that we have in common with him or her, the self, the objectless.

The veil can exercise a temporary power of attraction, but only the true self that remains in the background can bring us what we seek. We don't love the other, we love the love in the other.

This does not mean that we have to turn away from the other to turn towards God, the objectless, but rather that we see the other as an expression of love.

Relations with our partner, son or daughter, a stranger, a foreigner then take on another dimension. Daily life becomes a field of experience that is forever new. If we approach the other as potential divine consciousness, we force God to remove the mask, which he does with a miracle; and the miracle is the smile of God.

[Francis Lucille: [Love in the Other](#)]

The word 'love' is commonly used to denote a human emotion. Love *by* a person *for* another person or animal. But the love that Francis is referring to is an inherent characteristic of the one reality, pure consciousness. That might seem miles away from the common use of the word 'love', but when we look more deeply, we see that it isn't. As Rupert explains in the following question and answer, there are no separate human beings to love or be loved. The experience of love is itself the recognition of that:

Q: Why do spiritual masters use the term love to denote the Absolute? Isn't love such a uniquely human experience? We experience love to other people, animals, the world and ideas. How is it possible to call the absolute 'love'? Lizards, rocks, molecules or black holes do not experience love. Aren't we using a unique human experience to identify something much bigger than that? Isn't this anthropomorphism?

RS: Love is not a human experience. There are no human experiences. There are no entities called humans that experience certain things. Consciousness alone experiences. All experience belongs to consciousness, including all the thoughts, sensations and perceptions that are normally considered to belong to humans. The human being is not an entity that owns, has, feels or knows anything. It is a known or felt object, that is, a thought, sensation or perception.

In other words, only the absolute merits the name 'love'. You are confusing a set of feelings, bodily sensations and thoughts for the experience of love. Love is precisely the dissolution of all such objects in consciousness. Do we not know that? Do we not know that love is precisely the dissolution of everything that keeps us, defined, separate, apart? With respect, I would suggest that you are anthropomorphising experience in general by attributing it to a human entity. There is no such entity that knows or experiences.

Love is the experience of consciousness knowing its own being, un-apparently-modified by the dualising mind. That transparent, non-objective experience belongs to consciousness alone, not to humans, rocks, lizards, molecules, black holes, Ruperts or any other beings! And because all experience is ultimately consciousness knowing its own being, including the apparent modifications of the dualising mind, all experience is love itself.

[Rupert Spira, 30/08/ 2010 [Is it possible to have an experience of love which is not in the mind?](#)]

In a recent dialogue I had with Francis, I started by asking him whether the path of love could involve relations with insentient objects as well as with human beings or animals. And if so, what is the distinction between the path of love and the path of beauty? I mentioned a beautiful practice that Ellen Emmet had told me she followed. She said: 'It's about tactility – touching everything with love, a recognition of the love that surrounds and suffuses everything I touch'. This was Francis's response:

FL: You know, ultimately, they are the same experience. The distinctions that are made really relate to the context, to the phenomenal context. And of course, distinctions can always be made about the phenomenal context because every type of perception is different, from moment to moment. We never swim twice in the same river. So ultimately there are as many contexts as there are moments of experience. Then we can put this infinity of moments of experience, phenomenally into categories. And there comes the categories of truth, love, beauty – I mean the truth, the beautiful and the good. The traditional universals of Platonism. That's always arbitrary, this distinction.

So each of us, we may have a different context to which we associate the experience of love. For some people, it's going to be exclusively reserved for the experience we have in our relations with other human beings. In which case the experience of love could be defined as this realisation we have that the awareness of this person and my awareness are the same. We are the same. But then you cannot reduce that exclusively to relation between humans. Then you can include animals and all sentient beings. ...

As I often say, you don't have love without intelligence. There is an element of understanding in the experience of love and you don't have love without beauty. ...

We later went on to discuss what it means in practical terms to follow the path of love:

FL: Practically speaking, if we want to conduct experiments, we conduct experiments on two levels. On the conceptual level, is when we interact with people or whatever – with animals, trees, but mostly with human beings, as a premise to the interaction, prior to the interaction, we remind ourselves that the awareness here and the awareness there, is the same awareness. That although we seem to be separate in space, behind the scenes, in awareness we are one. We remind ourselves and to establish the relation, which is the ensuing relation, on this basis. That's on the conceptual level.

On the perceptual level, to do what Ellen was saying when she says 'I attribute love to the objects, to everything'. But in fact it's more than attributing love, because we say 'I give myself to everything around me'. In other words, it's not that 'I' limited 'here' consent as an act of donation to give myself to this chair, to this table, to this person. No. It's to realise I am already everywhere. So that when I am interacting with this person or this animal or this tree in front of me, I'm already there. There's no separation, there's no distance. That, on the perceptual and feeling level. And it's different from what people usually call the feeling of love, because the feeling of love is usually an emotion in the body that takes place when we are loved.

That's what people want. They want to be loved. They want to have this feeling, because what happens when I feel that I'm loved is that I relax. I let go of my defences. And the feeling that follows is the melting down of my defences. But that which made this melting down of my defences possible was that I knew I was not being attacked. Why? Because I was loved. How did I know I was loved? Because through my mirroring neurons, I felt that coming from the other person, there was precisely this experience of oneness, this experience that I was being

welcomed, and this experience of identity. So the experience of identity in the other person triggers a response in me that I felt. Because before, I was in ignorance, I was in separation. So this melting down of the separation, I felt it pleasurable and I want to renew this experience again and again. But this experience is not the experience of love. It is simply a by-product of the experience of love and I cannot get established in the experience of melting of my separation. Because once the separation has melted for good, there is nothing left to melt down any longer. So if I try to make permanent this experience of the melting down of my defences, it will require for me to build up again the sense of separation, so that it can melt down again and again. So it will require coming and going in and out of ignorance for that to be the case.

So it's very important not to have this misconception about what the experience of love is. It is so natural. It is permanent. It is this openness that makes you feel without worry and welcomes everything in its field and every being in its field. So the true experience of love is not the experience of being loved, but more the experience of loving. Because the experience of being loved is something that happens in time and when the defences melt down. The experience of loving is this openness which is permanent, and it can be permanent.

[Francis Lucille, 31st October 2020, *Our True Nature Is Not To Be Cognized But Recognized*]

Sometimes, the universality of love can seem to be a sticking point. Some people and some animals can seem more lovable than others. Here is Rupert's answer to the question about how to love everyone and everything:

See clearly that as long as there is 'everyone and everything', there is a personal 'I'. In other words, the personal 'I' and the world and others always come and go together. They are two sides of the same coin. And this personal 'I' cannot love anyone or anything. In fact, it is, by definition, the veiling of the love that is inherent in our own being.

All that is required is, as you say, to put down the 'I' thought, that is, to see clearly that you are not a separate entity. Take your stand knowingly as the presence to which, in which and as which all apparent things and others appear.

That presence does not love. It *is* love. Everything that is done from this place of presence is love itself in action, tailored appropriately to the situation at hand.

If this seems too abstract, then when faced with an apparent other, be open to the possibility that whatever it is in them that sees, hears, feels and thinks is the same as whatever it is in you that sees, hears, feels and thinks. In other words, treat everyone and everything as your very own self.

[Rupert Spira 3/01/2010 [How can I access the realm in which one loves everyone and everything?](#)]

Contemplation

*Thought doesn't know truth; it dissolves in it. Feeling doesn't find love; it merges in it.
Perception doesn't see beauty; it dies in it.*

[Rupert Spira]