



Three Faces of Love

Week 1 Resources

iEvolve: Global Practice Community

Open to the Three Faces of Love: Week One

Question:

Why do Three Perspectives or “Faces” of Love matter?

Intention:

- Explore the perspectives of the First, Second, and Third Person, and how they apply in your life.
- Use the three aspects of love to see why they matter. In other words, what happens to your loving as you shift perspectives?

Practice:

Explore the perspectives of the First, Second, and Third Person, and how they apply in the communications in your life.

Teaching:

Three Perspectives

The first sacred technology which we will unfold in the first session is, as we like to term in Integral theory, the “Three Faces of God” or in this case, “of Love”. This teaching is drawn from the great traditions of spirit and crystallized in the evolving Integral map. In Kabbalah, Kashmir Shaivism and in many other traditions, spirit is viewed in first, second and third person.

Our core understanding is that in order to realize Love, or as the old Hebrew mystics say, “To stand before God,” one must realize and incarnate all “Three Faces of Love”. To be Lifnei Hashem, "Before God" means therefore to incorporate the different faces of God or of love. This includes as many individual perspectives as possible. The closer one gets to spacious, a-perspectival seeing, the closer one comes to incarnating being and becoming itself and to transcending the personal for the transpersonal.

Love in the first person; Love in the second person; and Love in the third person. These are three distinct perspectives of spirit which disclose a different quality of loving and an awakened, Unique Self realizes and expresses all three perspectives. It is the embrace of all three perspectives in an integrated internal experience which produces what was called by the old masters He'arah; or what we might call Integral Evolutionary Awakening.

Uniqueness

Lifnei in Hebrew means not only in "front of" or "before" God; Lifnei also means face or perspective. In the language of the Talmud: "Just as their faces are different, so their opinions are different". This is understood to mean that the infinite uniqueness of every face is but an external expression of the infinite. Therefore, there is inherent ontological value and meaning in the existence of every human being. "Face" in the nomenclature of the ancient masters is often virtually synonymous with perspective.

The well known phrase of the ancient masters, "There are seventy faces to Torah," indicates that there are seventy co-valid perspectives on every issue of spirit. Every face is a perspective. Human adequacy and dignity derives from the radical affirmation of spirit expressed through each human being. This is the intention of the text in Genesis 1:28, where the human being is understood to be homo imago dei, formed in the image of the divine, what Christian Mystic Dante referred to as a "baby faced divine". Every human being holds a unique and infinitely valuable perspective. Every human being has a unique story, and each one of us has a unique path to awakening. This is the core teaching of Unique Self. In order to become fully awoken, fully whole and at the same time, fully unique, it is necessary to know love in all three perspectives. We will return to this toward the end of the course.

Uniqueness gives other people permission to be who they are. For the purposes of the course, it invites a deep interest in other people's experience because it is, as least in part, different than yours.

Science, by definition, is against first person and cannot hold uniqueness because it stands in the way of the scientific method! And yet, what is novelty as Whitehead talks about it? What are leaps? What are spontaneous outbursts of the universe?

Is there a place for it? Is there something like a sudden awakening? Does consciousness prepare itself to change rapidly? Let's imagine that it does...

What we need to be careful of is a mind that subtly turns against the scientific method, but rather, transcends and includes it.

First Person

From a first-person perspective, all of existence is love. All essence is love. The inside of the inside, the basis, the source of reality, is love. This is love in the first person. The way that first-person love appears in your life is as you. It has been said that, "God is closer to you than yourself. You could also say that Love is closer to you than yourself." It is your perspective, your body, heart, mind, circumstances, and story - utterly and gorgeously unique. It is the personal expression of being-love or the essence of all that is, and that essence lives in you, as you, and through you. But coming to realize this, clarifying all that is not this love, and becoming one with this love is to walk the spiritual

path. It will take the whole of your life to realize this first person expression of love. It is an endless journey into the heart of reality.

Another name for this first-person expression is True Self or in Zen, Original Face. True Self is beneath and beyond your personality; it is also beyond your personal story. It is the spacious ground of infinite love that lives in you and manifests as you. In the tradition of Hindu guru yoga, it is the role of the guru to introduce you to this first person love through the power of his or her transmission. As you become one with the heart of the guru, you begin to experience the emotional flavor of bliss. Another felt quality is the peace that comes when the dualistic split of self and other dissolves, and the devotee can relax in the absolute perfection of just what is. When Ram Dass talked about being in the presence of his guru, he was overcome not just by the love the guru felt for him, but by the love that Ram Dass himself was able to feel for everyone else at the same time. There was literally no separation at all - a radical experience of first person - when all the boundaries dissolved and all of the obstacles melted into one taste.

This traditional path is usually referred to as the path of enlightenment, in which the individual actually seeks to attain a state or permanent stage of mystical illumination. In most traditions, God in the first person is realized through meditation, clarification, and purification.

However, sometimes this merging happens through another method. In Kabbalah, the old masters called this Berur. The core of this method is that through Berur, you merge with your radically unique perspective. It is through the embrace of one's unique perspective that a particular human being is able to transcend his narrow human perspective to embrace a divine perspective. In other words, it is not merely that the personal precedes the transpersonal. Instead, the personal itself becomes the very gateway to the transpersonal. Of course, the divine perspective naturally includes all perspectives. It thus transcends and includes one's own unique perspective.

First Person Practice:

Make a first person statement in the present tense about someone or something you love. Complete the following sentence.

I notice love in this moment _____
(e.g. when I look at these aspen trees outside my window; when I really receive the sound of your voice.)

Second Person

God in the second-person is what mystical scholar, Gershom Scholem, called Communion. This is the core experience of the human being who is not merged with the divine, but rather is in relationship to God. God in second-person is all about relationship. Whether the relationship is that of a servant to his master, or a lover and his beloved, or

a relationship between partners or even friends, each are all "relating" to God. All of the above models of relationship find expression in Hebrew wisdom teachings. All are forms of God in the second-person. The most powerful form of God in the second person is almost certainly the prayer experience. It is told that when Hassidic master Levi Yitzchak of Beridchev used to pray he would begin the standard liturgical form of blessing. "Boruch Ata Adonai", "Blessed are you God", and then break out of the mold of blessing crying out in sheer joy, YOU YOU...YOU ...YOU! He would lose himself in these words repeatedly shouting in ecstasy, YOU... YOU...YOU!! This is the rapture of God in the second person. Nachman of Bratzlav taught the spiritual practice of Hitbodedut. In one form, this meant walking alone in the forest "talking to God as you would to your friend". In God in the second-person we meet God and bow. In God in the second-person we meet god and partner. In God in the second-person we meet god in the urge for erotic merger. In God in the second-person we meet god and love. The key however is the encounter. It is the encounter with God in history and in the lived reality of every human being that is the essence of the God in the second person experience.

Spirit in second-person, in particular, relates to love, and it's a love that goes both ways. It's a love that individuals can have for a God or Goddess, however they conceive the spirit in second person. But most importantly, it's the love that spirit has for us. Marc wrote in the introduction to the Future of Love teleseries that sometimes we go our whole lives waiting for somebody to say "I love you," but the fact is moment to moment, spirit is saying, "I love you." In every single moment, aware of it or not, you are drenched in divine love. Every single corner of you is loved and accepted. Every single inch of you is loved and accepted. Every single part of you is absolutely loved and absolutely accepted, and it's that extraordinary love that is so utterly nourishing and utterly enlivening and utterly profoundly awakening.

Practice in Second Person

Practice in 2nd-Person: Ask a Question

Ask the following question to the other two members in your group:

Who were your best friends as a child?

Who was the person that you felt most loved by and why through your growing up?

What did they give to you that you still have?

Third Person

In every single moment, aware of it or not, you are drenched in the kosmic love that animates the Kosmos, and which is alive in and as all that is. Every single corner of you is loved and accepted in that love. It is utterly nourishing, radically enlivening and profoundly awakening. It is wholly beyond the personal, even as it is completely personal.

Leading edge scientific thinkers are now just beginning to recognize this very love that the mystics spoke of, as the animating quality of the evolutionary impulse, or what has been termed by some leading edge thinkers as the “Fifth Force in the Universe.” It is the force of eros and attraction beyond the four physical forces which govern reality. The ‘fifth force’ is that matter has a tendency to self-organize, to rise above its chaotic state into both more complex forms that are more unified - that is to say more conscious which means more loving.

That is all good as far as it goes. It describes the outside of reality. That same reality described on the inside is love. Another way to say it would be that the great web of life or the fifth force of the universe is a third-person view of reality. Third-person sees reality as a complex evolving meshwork of integrated matter or “Its.” This is precisely right. This perception of reality comes from deploying particular faculties of perception namely the empirical and logical eyes of the senses and the eye of the mind. These faculties do not however exhaust our knowing of reality for they are a third-person way of seeing the world. Deploying the faculties of perception available through a different lens, what has been called by many mystics, the eye of the spirit, a different face of the same reality is revealed. This eyes reveals beyond a shadow of a doubt that the inner quality of matter is consciousness. And that the inner quality of reality is consciousness which is love.

God in the third-person also includes all of the talk which describes and maps the divine reality of the world. In other words, anything that is perceived as an object of perception, as opposed to the subject of awareness. God in the third-person could be the physical sciences, social sciences, systems and chaos theory, Buddhadharma, Jewish Law or metaphysics. Of course, the various sciences, system theories and the like are unconscious faces of God; they only become conscious faces of God when they recognize not only the surface but the interior depth dimension of reality. All third-person maps of reality are God in the third-person. Third-person perspectives are the source of maps of reality, whether through the tools of sociology, complexity theory, psychological theory, the sciences, or certain forms of theology and philosophy.

Now here is the key point. In order to attain a significant level of enlightenment one must engage all three faces of god as one. It is in the integration of the three faces that one attains depth and wisdom.

This is of course very different then the usual understandings of enlightenment which locate it in a first-person God experience in which individuality is effaced and the separate self is absorbed into the one. Although absorption is a key feature of God in the first-person in Integral Evolutionary mysticism, it is only a stage in a larger God face process which itself is but one of the three major faces of God.

Each face of God has its own natural strength and it's own unique shadow. It is only through the integration of all three that one attains the depth beyond the surface. It is only then that one can stand face to face with God or attain what the Kabbalists call Partzuf Shalem; the full face of God.

The contemporary world of spirit, however, can be most appropriately mapped as a struggle between the Three Faces. Each face attempts to dominate or colonize the other two. Each face claims that truth is accessible only- or at least primarily- through the perspective of its eyes. Both individuals and social systems find themselves tugged between the three faces. Often a person or a community abandons one face in order to embrace a different face which they feel is more true. In doing so they feel compelled to reject their previous experience. But they feel incomplete and dissatisfied and are often unsure why? Often they wind up reverting to the perspective they initially rejected, but in doing so, usually abandon the new face they had engaged. The implicit message of contemporary culture, as we shall see below, is that one must choose between the three. This is a tragedy because the lack of any one of the three leaves on with a gaping hole of need, ethics desire and illumination.

Examples of institutions of 3 perspectives:

- 1) Ashram, Spiritual Center, Kabbalah Centre, Zendo
- 2) Church, Temple, Synagogue
- 3) University

Practice in Third-Person:

Imagine a person or a figure who embodies “love” to you. It could be Christ, the Baal Shem Tov, a Jedi Knight, or a happy Taoist Sage. It could be an image of a good friend who simply shows up in life in a way you admire.

Please complete the following sentence.

I experience love in the image of _____. Please give plenty of sensory detail to your image.

I would like to develop the ability or qualities of love that _____.

I have seen love operate as the Fifth Force when _____.

Assignment Week 1:

For this WEEK (Oct. 5 - 11) in the 3 Faces of Love Online Group

1. Let’s build a list of specific examples and experiences of why Three Faces matters. But as William Carlos Williams says, “No ideas, but in things.” Describe your quick stories, your two-line poems, your energized ah-has! are all welcome. Let’s try not to phi-

Philosophize too much in the group, lest we put each other to sleep. Keep in mind that the Three Faces points out where we are putting our awareness.

Examples for the list.

The first list is compiled from different experiences.

The second one uses the same experience in all three perspectives.

3p: I can stand back and see a negative pattern in my life in third-person. I see that when I go into a room, and I don't know anyone, I immediately feel nervous, want a drink or to seduce a woman.

2P: I am listening in second-person to my father's experience of having cancer. I share in his story of being old; and we laugh anyway.

1P: I am an old happy Taoist sage, moving with the autumn season into winter.

Baby

3P: I see the new baby as pure, open, something completely unknown.

2P: I feel the moods of the baby come and go, and I notice how I am affected by them.

1P: I am the baby, crying, wetting, falling asleep.

Please post your practice assignments in our online group [here](#).