

Your Unique Self

What It Means to Be a
Lover . . . from God's Eyes

BY DR. MARC GAFNI

The true nature of your values is always revealed in death. In eulogies, both in what is spoken and unspoken, there is something of the essential nature of your life and loyalties. Sometimes, however, before you die you are strangely privileged to declare where your ultimate loyalty lies.

It was September 11, 2001. The planes had just crashed into the Twin Towers in Manhattan. Victims had moments to use their cell-phones. No one called asking for revenge. No one offered philosophical explanations or profound insights into the nature of reality. People did one thing and one thing only: they called the people close to their hearts to say, "I love you."

"I love you" is our declaration of faith. Implicit in those words is everything holy. Yet we no longer know what we mean when we say it. It used to mean, "I am committed to you. I will live with you forever." Or it might have meant, "You are the most important person in my life." But it no longer seems to mean that. And when you no longer understand your own deepest declarations of love, you are lost. You become alienated from love, which is your home. Despair, addiction, and numbness become your constant companions.

For many of us, love has lost its luminosity as the organizing principle of our lives. Love seems to have diminished power to locate us and to guide us home. "I love you" has become banal, casual, and desiccated. One day love holds you in the place of your belonging, and the next day you are exiled, lost. For many of us, "I love you" has ceased to be a place where we can find our home.

What do you really mean when your highest self says to another, "I love you"? And if I might audaciously add to the question: Why do all the great traditions, in one way or another, talk about the obligation to love God and your neighbor?

This injunction makes little sense. How can



one be obligated to love another? How does a human being love God? Is God lovable? Can you touch God, cuddle with God, or actually feel rushing love for God without entering into an altered state?

And can we truly feel love toward all of our neighbors? Isn't love reserved for the very few special people in our lives? Said differently and more directly, what is love?

To know the way of enlightenment is to know the way of love. To find your destination in love, you must consider the reason for all your detours. You must wonder about your wrong turns in love. Where did you go wrong? Is there something you did not understand about the nature of love? You are not alone in your questions. There is hardly a conscious person alive who has not asked these questions—this writer included. So I will speak to myself through you: love is a verb.

If you are like most modern, intelligent, and sincere seekers, you might be making two core mistakes about love. First, you might regard love as an emotion. When the emotion is gone, you are no longer in love and thus can no longer stay in relationship. Second, you identify love with a particular emotion. Perhaps you

identify love with the emotion of infatuation.

Both of these mistaken beliefs are significant obstacles on your path to spiritual liberation. Both mistakes obscure love's innate ability to take you home. Love at its core is not an emotion. Love is a perception. Love is a faculty of perception that allows you to see the inner nature of All-That-Is. To love another human is to perceive their true nature. To love is to perceive the infinite specialness and divine beauty of the beloved.

To be a lover is to see beyond the limited and distorting vision of your separate-self. To be a lover is to see with God's eyes. Your beloved is both your lover and All-That-Is. To be loved by another is to have your true nature, your unique self, seen. Your unique self is the personal face of essence that lives in you, as you, and through you. It is not the uniqueness of your conditioning but the irreducible uniqueness of your essence.

To love God is to let God see with your eyes, to empower God with the vision of your unique

perspective. You are living out of a passion for God. You are being asked to live with God's eyes, to act with God's eyes, to react with God's eyes, to write your Book of Life with God's eyes as God would see from your perspective. If you are successful, then your perspective becomes available to God. It finds God and feeds God. It gives God strength and joy. You must consider that being a devotee is nothing but being God from a distinct perspective. This is the only truth about individuality.

Mature individuality is not about being separate. It is about having a distinct perspective within the context of union. To be responsible for this perspective is to declare the truth from this vantage point but without making it the only perspective, and without any degree of attachment to the vantage point we have clung to from the past—from our previous conditioning. This is what it means to be a lover. 🐦

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