

Where Is Love?

A Perilous Search

by Alan Harris

WE ARE FOREVER LOOKING FOR LOVE in our lives. We look for a sweetheart who will turn into a loving spouse. We look for love from our parents and respect from our children. We look for love from our government, hoping our leaders will be compassionate with us and our countrymen. But strangely, we often get into our worst messes when all we are doing is looking for love. A marriage may split up due to one of the partners looking elsewhere for love. A teenager may wreck his car and his body by driving too fast in a quest for a certain kind of love from his peers. Desperate for love, people ruin their minds with drugs which give them a temporary surge of a counterfeit feeling similar to love.

Does anyone ever find love? If so, where is it? Observation suggests that love, real as it is, cannot be found and isn't anywhere. When you go looking for it, you are going to find something else. What you find may keep you occupied for awhile, even addicted, but it's not love. Love is the most priceless treasure that life affords us. Religions enshrine it, billboards exploit it, professors categorize it, and newspapers report on its perversions. But it is nowhere to be found.

Love is a song that threads its way through our lives from beginning to end, but did you ever try to *find* a song? You just know when you're hearing a song, and you just know when you're experiencing deep love, but you can't *find* either one. The song is a process. It weaves its way through the vocal cords and through the air molecules, but neither the vibrations, nor the ears that hear them, nor the voice that produces them, is the song. You can write notes on paper to suggest a song, but the notes are not the song. A song is a process that cannot be the same twice. Even if you hear a recorded song twice in succession, there are two different songs because you yourself have changed slightly between hearings. A song is a participatory, unrepeatable process. And so is love.

Love and songs hide in the cracks of the universe--not only between the atoms, but between the betweens, in the realm of quality, not quantity--in the unmanifest (which is nowhere). Love and songs must and do express themselves using time and space, but they can be neither found nor captured in time and space.

If no one were looking for love, our world would be in sad shape, some might say. But our world already is in sad shape precisely because so many people are on this quest which seems so laudable and reasonable until you examine the results of it. The problem with looking for love is that it is the me that wants it. The me wants love in the form of pleasure, money, status, fame, and any number of other forms. And if the me wants these things badly enough, the me will get them. Unfortunately, all the me gets is the forms and not the love. The me grabs for the beautiful flame and gets only hot ashes. Love eludes the me always, because the me is somewhere, and love is nowhere--they can never meet.

Is there no way, then, to find love? Is there no solution to this dilemma? Probably not. However, it is a simple fact that anyone can love. It is one of our inalienable rights as humans to love and to give. Perhaps life could not even exist without this process. There is an electricity generated in the action of love that is as real as that

which powers a train or lights a reading lamp. As with electricity, no one really knows what love is nor where it comes from, but we do know we can channel both electricity and love through conduits. Properly channeled electricity can transform our environment, and properly channeled love can transform the quality of our lives.

It seems that love is most vibrant in us when we forget ourselves. Self-forgetfulness is recommended by most religions as a way to peace and enlightenment. Knowing this, spiritual aspirants try to forget themselves, hoping peace and enlightenment will come. Catch number one here is that they cannot forget that they are forgetting themselves, so they are still caught in the me. There is no catch number two.

When we grow weary of looking for love and finding only its ashes and its forms, we may suddenly give up the search. When we have been bitten by our greed and have had our very health impaired by our search for love, we stop our hurried quest one day and look within--not within the me, but within the cracks of the universe. We may not see anything, but we feel something--we hear a song. We feel a change in ourselves, a new perspective from nowhere. We haven't asked for it. We just stop searching and there it is. That is love, sneaking into our lives from the cracks between the betweens. We were never away from love, but we could never find it. We wore ourselves out like the man who ran around the streets of the village searching for some air to breathe. He wasted much air to do his searching, but he never found air.

Listen to the silence if you would hear the song of love. Love may catch you between bites of an apple or while you are cleaning the toilet. You live within love always, but you can never find it, capture it, preserve it, or explain it--you might as well try to build a rose with a hammer and nails. Just wait, and listen, and watch, and work--and one day when the time is right, a rose appears on the bush. This rose is rooted in the cracks of the universe, and so is love, and so are you.

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