

## What is Love?

by Don Oakley, 2018

“Love” is a tricky word in the English language because it’s used for so many different things. We can love our dog, our house, our car, our new shoes, chocolate ice-cream, our children, or we can have a new love in our life. All of these expressions talk about some relationship that “I,” as an individual, have with something that appears to be outside of myself, which is fine. It’s part of life to be in relationship with others and objects – things which give us pleasure. That’s wonderful.

But what I’d like to talk about is something deeper than that. We could call it “transcendent love” or “uncaused love” – love that does not have a specific reason; love that arises without the prospect of personal gain. And we can all sense into that. If we’ve lost a loved one, we can experience grief in the loss of their physical presence. And yet, something remains. Something loving remains in the absence of the other: that heartache, that caring. That love is unaffected by death because it remains after death.

In Biblical terms, we’ve all heard, “Love thy neighbour as thy self,” and can recognize how difficult that is from an individual perspective. We make love conditional. We love this neighbour but the other one? Not so much! It depends on their behaviour, how beneficial they have been to us, whether their dog barks at night etc. But when we’re talking about transcendent love, it’s not dependent on the other person’s behaviour. We might not even like the other person’s behaviour, we might not agree with it, we might feel that it’s detrimental to themselves, others, and the world at large. And yet, a different quality of relationship is possible, when we recognize our own True Nature – that which is beyond our conceptual mind and conditioning and of a different dimension.

Consciousness is not a thing; it’s something that exists beyond life and death and this body-mind. When we can see that in ourselves, we can see that same consciousness in our neighbour, regardless of their behaviour, and whether or not we like them. There can still be this recognition: the consciousness that is here with me is the same consciousness that’s over there with them – no difference, no separation. And that’s where the love really arises. It’s seeing that the other person is also an expression of the Divine, of existence. It appears like this over here (with me), and like that over there (with them).

Just noticing and appreciating that we are all participating in this same life – in this same divine creation - regardless of our myriad appearances, is really a beautiful thing when it’s recognized. That love is causeless. It exists. It’s the source of compassion. It’s unaffected by circumstances. It’s generous. It’s open. And it’s not something that we have to do; it’s something that we recognize as an attribute of our deepest nature. It’s an attribute of true consciousness. And when we sense into that, that love is transcendent.