What do we mean by Love?

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Love is a projection

If you have a warm, cuddly feeling towards someone, all too often it's an emotion springing from your own need – to have a boyfriend / girlfriend / partner, someone who gives you value by wanting you too. The fulfillment of your needs is projected onto this person – so we have two different things, the reality of that person and how you want them to be. Initially you think that many of your needs will be met, the classic phase of seeing the other through rose-coloured glasses. Disillusionment is inevitable...

Love is something we need

Marshall Rosenberg is well-known for his work promoting NVC – non-violent communication. In his view, love is something that each of us needs rather than an emotional feeling. NVC is a non-demanding way to express your needs for being really seen, appreciated and in general to get your needs met. Conversely, love is something that we *do* to give others that which they need.[i] Personal note: I find his approach very valuable.

Love is an attitude towards yourself

Love is the attitude towards yourself which you discover (uncover), when you move from judgemental Dualities to non-judgemental (or 'preferences only') Polarities. The non-judgemental stance towards yourself means that you totally accept yourself. The acceptance itself is of a mental nature, inasmuch as mental judgement about yourself ("I'm not kind / skilled / good-looking enough" etc.) ceases. This removes a hindrance and allows you to notice your true, original attitude towards yourself, which was always there but obscured.

It is: I love myself.

Love is a subject – subject relationship

Love is not a subject – object relationship. It is a subject – subject relationship.

People may for example say "I love chocolate". The chocolate is an object. I would prefer to say "I like chocolate". Because if we then say "I love John" then either we have put the person John in the same category as a bar of chocolate; or we are using the word 'love' ambiguously, and possibly can't even say what we actually do mean by it.

I would prefer to talk about love (only) in the context of Mutuality. I use the word Mutuality to mean that I and another being are both noticing the reality of our own respective Being, and also that of the other being, and that we are both doing so at the same time. For short: I am, and you are. In this shared and mutual awareness, love is not a 'feeling' (feelings like sad, happy, confident, …) but rather an experience. It is something in our basic nature, in the shared source of all beings, which was always there in the underlying substrate of our (apparently) individual identities, unnoticed. Through the mutual awareness, that underlying non-separateness behind our existence as individuals, our common foundation, becomes noticed (by both), and the result is an experience: Love.

When the other has been reduced to an object, and love taken to be an emotion, it is a very fickle thing – "I love you so much" can soon turn into "I don't love you any more". But the experience of Love is completely reliable, it can and will be repeated any time you 'go mutual' with another being. If you don't quite get what I am saying, then: Why not just try to be mutual with someone? Feel free to try this also with animals and even trees and plants…

Love is our true nature

This can also be formulated as 'Love is the natural state of our true being' or 'We are love'. This type of assertion is not uncommon in esoteric / spiritual circles, which is why I've included it as an option, although I don't agree with it. I would prefer to say that the nature of the *universe* is such that everything is informationally connected with everything else. When we consciously experience this fact, it often causes a very euphoric feeling; which quite a few people then try to explain as love being our true nature. But in scientific terms, they aren't explaining anything, rather just interpreting the feelings which are a common reaction to experiencing PTST.

Love is a state of being

Love is not a relationship; it is a state of being. Love is the state you arrive at when you have not only the basic ability to experience Mutuality, but also have made it a habit – "I am, and you are" has become the state in which you move through your life.

Love yourself absolutely (Ramesh Balsekar quotes Sri Nisargadatta)

This text is taken from the foreword by Ramesh Balsekar to the book 'Seeds of Consciousness' (a collection of talks with Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj), where he himself quotes Nisargadatta.

Be true to your own self. Love yourself absolutely. Do not pretend that you love others as yourself. Unless you have realised others as one with yourself, you cannot love them. Don't pretend to be what you are not, don't refuse to be what you are. Your love for others is the result of self-knowledge, not its cause.

Love explained by Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

> When I see that I am nothing – that is wisdom. When I see that I am everything – that is love. Between these two my life moves.

The following excerpt is from 'Seeds of Consciousness' (page 31).

> From my standpoint love is the quality to be. Beingness is love. Only when this "I Amness" appears is there love. Can the love prevail if the "I Amness" is not there? You have the urge to be, to continue your beingness – that is the love.

Well, what *is* Love?

Is it a projection, or consciously accomodating others needs? Is it an attitude, a relationship, our true nature or a state of being? It depends on how you want to define the word love; if you choose one of the statements above, then you will need different words for the other meanings. This serves to illustrate why I try not to use the word love at all; the meanings I have offered are not what you would 'normally' hear when you pose the question. I expect that if you ask 100 people what they *mean* by 'love', you would get at least 95 different answers, a great number of which would be remarkably imprecise. Many people giving answers will be unsure about what they actually *do* mean.

I find it helpful to give enticing pointers to more connected states of being, beyond the standard consensus; and to offer a range of exercises to help people experience these states for themselves. Only then will you REALLY know what I am talking about (anything

else is just parrot-knowledge – believing is not knowing). Especially in the sense that I use the word love for an experience. Only two people who have the same experience can be sure that they mean the same thing.

i NVC – Marshall Rosenberg
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otynMEeMStg
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cB0VgXHbC2M
https://www.google.com/search?q=what+did+marshall+rosenberg+say+about+love
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