

## **Integral Spiritual Experience Two: Exploring Love**

### **Irini Rockwell**

Some 500 of us from 30 countries gathered at the gorgeous Asilomar conference center in California to look at “The Future of Love.” The conference’s three day thematic structure was well chosen: 1. falling in love, 2. falling out of love, and 3. falling in love again. With these three aspects of love’s journey, the experiential trajectory was easy to follow. We all know the impassioned flow of falling in love. More challenging is running the rapids with someone: we can capsize or find ourselves in 3. a deeper integration and sweetness. This sequence rings true whether experienced with a primary partner or anyone else.

The Integral movement aims at a higher consciousness: to include all peoples, all faiths, and to cut through religious distinctions to find a common spirituality. When we transcend our differences, we find a most fundamental common denominator: love. We all want to love and be loved. Simple. We can honor our basic human goodness: we are good people with good intentions. And our primary intention is to love. In this, the event was a success. We all engaged with each other and opened, opened our hearts unconditionally, no matter who was sitting in front of us. Yes! Interestingly, both men I “fell in love with” in a dyad exercise are gay. For brief moments we loved each other unconditionally. What a treat! Mind can create so many differences; it is through love that we unite.

The conference’s many presenters—both in plenary sessions as well as in a plethora of break out groups—created amazing richness. However, this led to the dominant tone being of marketplace rather than a sanctuary. As well, the dominant mode was download with not much time to upload, in-load, go in. We were too often passive receivers rather than engaged practitioners. In exploring spirituality, the dichotomy between conceptual accumulation of knowledge and embodied spirituality—coming from the profound spiritual traditions of the East—is crucial to address. If we stay in a mental mode, our spirituality does not go very deep.

Our spirituality, whether in an established religion or eclectic, is the deepest aspect of ourselves, at the core of our being. We all have a unique journey in experiencing this deepest self. So we need to honor both a desire to engage with others as well as to attend, with full integrity, to our own spiritual path. It gets tricky if we all want to jump on the same boat and say, “It’s all the same.” It is not. My lineage is distinct from

yours. Yet we can celebrate both our differences and our communality: not one; not two. For example, my spiritual path for over thirty years has been with Vajrayana or Tantric Buddhism. So, for me, the gathering was not so much about deep spiritual experience but opening to others in an intentional community. The marketplace is delightful but then I go “home” to engage more deeply in my own tradition, singing “many thanks to everyone for our shared humanity!”

Living in a global village as we do, a world spirituality is a wonderful idea. However, it can be tricky to put into practice and brings up many questions. More than ever before we need to engage with and appreciate our diversity. But can we become one? In applauding breadth do we lose depth? Are we merely gathering knowledge of spiritual traditions or can we find a shared depth? And maybe, finally, our capacity to love is that depth.

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