



Where the Hell ART Thou, Romeo?

Intro

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WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED LOVE?

INTRODUCTION

Love is the energy of the Universe directed towards particular objects such as people, animals, places, things, ideals, experiences, images, etc. It is the basis of all attraction, from the components of atomic structure to galaxies. It is the foundation of relatedness and the essence of life.

It is also enormously complex, contradictory and confusing in its manifestations. Needless to say, it's a huge subject, and as a result, it can only be partially dealt with here. The plan of this chapter is to present two major aspects of love - the biological/functional and the spiritual/meaningful.

While this is a totally arbitrary distinction at one level, it allows a certain useful "chunking" of the information involved. We will start with the biological/functional aspect first.

BIOLOGICAL BASICS

It's been said that "Love makes the world go round," and as far as people are concerned, that does seem to be the case. Without other people, life loses its zest, and without significant relationships and contributions to and from other people, life loses its meaning.

Love is the positive half of the biological commitment system. The negative half being guilt, which motivates the avoidance of, and the compensation for, harming those and/or that to which we are committed.

Love is the emotion that makes human community, and therefore human existence possible. While it is possible to be a hermit, such an individual is rejecting the people and the culture from which they come.

A truly non-connected individual seems to be “animal-like” (which is insulting to the nature and experience of animals, by the way). Mutual commitment to and from other people is the “glue” that holds people and societies together, and that allows people to create and maintain the collective and time-spanning culture that makes human life possible.

It provides the energy and investment that makes all the effort involved in sustaining a culture feasible. It is then possible for people to live without significant fear of the physical environment, and for them to have enough time to be human rather than to be survival-scrabbling organisms. It is truly a “labor of love.”

We are simultaneously super-intelligent and super-vulnerable. The individual human without a bonded enculturation is extremely ill-equipped to contend with the environment. We are physically weak, we have no natural weapons on our bodies, we have no armor or protective camouflage, we have few instincts, we are not fleet of foot, we have little endurance, and our senses are not the most acute.

We therefore band together to provide each other the protection and sustenance we need. We are also inordinately intelligent, which requires that we have a continuous deluge of information just to keep interested in living.

Only other people and the situations that arise with and because of them can provide that kind of input. The number of individuals needed to keep each other active and interested increased from 15 to 20 in a chimp group to the 150 to 250 in the village.

That, in turn, made things very complex in terms of the divisions of labor, the organization of activities and events, the storage and distribution of resources, the flow of information, the relationship structures, etc. Out of this grew the necessity and resulting manifestation of culture, and culture relies totally upon mutual commitment and engagement.

All of this starts intrauterine, where the fetus picks up on the sounds of the world, the biochemistry of the mother’s reactions to things, the muscle wall messages, the “vibes” coming to them from the mother and to a lesser extent from the environment.

Then there is the birth process, which communicates in condensed form the nature of the early life they are going to encounter and experience. Then there is the all-important initial contact bonding process, or its distortion, or absence, with the profound life-long effects on the ability to connect, to commit and to receive love.

The “cute” reaction (the irresistible urge to pick up, stroke, interact with and care for such things as puppies, squirrels, and little babies) is Nature’s way of building in the kind of early commitment that is necessary for true humanity to occur.

Above and beyond the “cute” releaser reaction is the “love” response. The releaser stimuli are as complex, pervasive and varied as the entire range of human characteristics. The basic biological response to being exposed to the eliciting stimuli. The love response is a desire for spatial, visual, verbal, interactional and physical contact with the person.

While this natural response can be punished enough, especially early on, to be shut down or to be overridden, the basic biology of the thing is that we are all “polymorphously perverse,” as Freud put it.

In other words, we can’t help but be turned on by all other people, regardless of their size, age, gender, culture, color, ethnicity, role or other characteristics. That is, our very nature to love.

The basic beginning of a sequence of events in a love progression is a desire for interaction upon encountering the person. Then there is a natural tendency to approach the individual - that is, "stroke-seeking."

If the initial contacts prove rewarding, a gradual or rapid increase in attraction occurs, until it reaches the affectionate level. If further contacts pay off in this way, the relationship will develop into full-blown intimacy.

In addition to the "natural" progression from the initial impulse to approach there are, of course, many learned alternative progressions, particularly in response to "taboo" people (regarded as inappropriate as a relationship figure), people who remind you of hated others, stellar people, etc. Attraction to such people will lead to "emotional chain reactions" due to the person's learning history.

For instance, Freud built his whole theory of paranoia on such a chain. He theorized that the individual feels, "I love you" in response to another person of the same gender. This then chains off fear, so s/he does a "bend over backwards" reaction formation, and s/he says to him/herself, "I hate you!"

Then s/he runs into guilt over his/her hatred, so s/he turns it around into "You hate me!" Then s/he goes into a panic over this presumed hatred from the other person, and s/he gets ready to protect him/herself. So s/he is out to kill before they kill him/her.

Sexuality is a universal component of all attraction, but it is able to be expressed independently of affection. It is nevertheless important to note that love lies at the base of all positive human interactions.

Procreation is one form of contribution, and it expresses exquisitely the commitment that lies at the foundation of all love-based behavior. The full expression of the sexual component, if love seems most effective in intimate relationships, where all aspects of the love system are allowed to operate at once. The "double bubble" - the kind of twin-peaked aura of energy around and between affectionate partners - is always present in true intimacy.

That doesn't mean that "all is peaches and roses." Indeed, true love invariably involves the "toothpaste rage" phenomenon. We don't "give a damn" about how a stranger squeezes the toothpaste tube, but if we have told our loved one how we want it done and yet they persist in doing it their way, this has profound implications about the degree of commitment there really is.

Lying at the base of "toothpaste rages" is a primordial fear - abandonment-anxiety. For that is one of the prices we pay for loving someone - namely that they may leave us. So this type of rage is not the opposite of love, nor is hatred, which is a combination of fear, anger and disgust. Apathy is the true opposite of love.

The other price you pay for loving someone is vulnerability. Once an intimate relationship starts, everything the loved one does takes on a tremendous potency and power. There is a natural progression of relationships that progresses from this vulnerability.

The first question we ask ourselves about another person (who, if they became important to us, could hurt us) is, "Is this person relevant?" That is, is there anything meaningful and "good" likely to come from relating to this person? The "mirror image" question is, of course, "Is there anything about me that is relevant to him/her?" Or, to put it more succinctly, "Am I worth anything to him/here?"

If you find each other relevant, you then include each other in your lives. Once that happens, the vulnerability issue becomes paramount. As a result, the next issue is whether you can trust him/her.

And so the whole matter of who is going to have, or who is going to have to relinquish, control of what areas, situations, feelings, activities, information, environments, resources, etc. comes to the fore.

The successful resolution of this issue usually involves some form of equality of power, all things considered. One partner may control some areas while the other controls others, or they may hassle out who controls each situation, or whatever. In general, they are of equal power in the relationship.

It is of course possible to enter an unequal power relationship, but since this type of situation is basically a prototype of the “Parent-Child” type of relationship, to do so is often, if not always, a “script” type of replication of the major components of the unfinished businesses from your childhood family life. This is not likely to be very successful.

After the control/trust issue has been more or less settled and they still find each other rewarding, then full-fledged affection can occur. This involves the desire for various types of contact, touching, caressing and “stroking,” both physical and otherwise comes on strongly. The partner takes on a certain “glow” or impactful importance that activates approach and contact impulses.

Finally, if the relationship continues to evoke stroke-seeking, full sexuality will be activated, and all the issues and processes involved in that area of our life history and self-expression come to the fore.

Here, too, there can be pseudo-affectionate and “twisted intimacy” responses that developed from distortions of intimate relationships and self-attitudes arising from childhood family experiences.

Indeed, there is what could be called “moth to flame” attraction figures who in effect represent the most rejecting parent that you are trying to get out of your head and out of your relationship patterns.

These “nemesis figures” abound in our lives, and they are almost always what is involved in the “zing went the strings of my heart” rush reactions in romantic relationships, unfortunately.

Perhaps the most outstanding characteristic of lasting relationships is the “make and mend” orientation. That is, instead of taking a “sink or swim, buddy!,” “my way or the highway,” “the problem with you is. . .” type of approach to the problems that arise from the mutual vulnerability, shared commitments and mutual and joint destinies affecting impacts on intimacy, the partners take a committed, needs-assessing, problem-solving approach to the “scary toothpaste tube” issues of the relationship.

The other major characteristic of this group is that everything the partner does expresses commitment of the “your welfare is as important to me as is mine” orientation. And that goes all the way out to the ability to do the “caring enough to give the very worst” fighting with the partner for the partner.

In addition, there is the notable presence of affection and “turn on” as expressed in the “kinesics dance” that takes place at the rate of sixteen interactions per second in a finely attuned coordination of movements with each other. Also involved are a lot of eye

contact, forward leaning, mutual orientation of their bodies, spatial closeness, and of course caressing and physical and verbal affection.

SPIRITUAL SUBSTANCE

It was said at the outset that love is the energy of the Universe and indeed it is. What we see played out bio-socially is the result of the Cosmic Laws governing the operation of the Universe. The remainder of this book will examine love from the spiritual universals perspective.

There are three levels of psycho-spiritual development - the “pre-personal,” the “personal” and the “trans-personal.” What that translates into on the practical scene is levels of what Jung calls “individuation.”

On the “pre-personal” level, the individual has not differentiated themselves from the maternal matrix, and they function in a totally egocentric “I am the center of the universe and the universe is me” manner. “Narcissistic” people, who were never allowed to differentiate from their mother and who remain in an umbilical symbiosis with her and her stand-ins, are very childish and ecologically oblivious.

The world is an amorphous and “magical mystery tour” wonder to them, and they behave in a totally in-the-moment sensation-enslaved and desire-dominated fashion. While there is a certain innocence and “naturalness” about them, they are basically highly primitive and thoughtless in their functioning. They are incapable of love in any real sense. All they can manage is to be in a parent-child dependency and an unequal exchange of energy relationship.

When an individual is coming from a pre-personal space, there is a great deal of “projection” in their functioning. In other words, they elicit from the Universe via thought forms, choice patterns, and behavioral aspects of themselves that they reject, and they attack them in the other person in an “I just HATE that about you!” pattern.

There is also a great neediness and demanding, with no real identity of their own. They have overwhelming impulses, sexual cravings, fear and attachment. They are intensely immature, with a deep need to maintain a parent-child pattern of relationship.

There is profound abandonment-paranoia, and they are apt to have an extreme need to please, appease and placate. They are also heavily into control and coercion, petulant and primitive punishment-dispensing and -seeking, protection-eliciting, compulsive taking and super-sucking, and in general parenting-enforcing. They live an addictive lifestyle where there is nothing but the moment, and every moment has to be minimally painful and maximally enjoyable.

At the “personal” level of development, there is an acute awareness of one’s separateness from others, and at a deeper and more unconscious level from God. This arises from the individual’s having successfully differentiated themselves from the maternal matrix and from having formed what is called the “ego” or the “self.”

There is an extremely pronounced sense of a separate “I” who is impacted on by the Universe and who impacts on the Universe. There is an intense awareness of the environment, and especially of other people who are strongly experienced as “not-I.”

One major aspect of this is gender over-identification and excessive adherence to the sex roles. As their soul encompasses elements of both genders, the biological gender

results in a suppression of the other components of the soul in the “buried alter-gender” - the “anima” in the male and the “animus” in the female.

The sex roles result in a separation of thinking from intuition, and sensation from feeling. Also involved in the “personal ego” type of functioning is another suppressed component composed of all the aspects of human functioning that were not allowed in the individual’s formative experience.

These unexpressed potentialities and capabilities become infected and infested in the form of exaggerated and unreasonable impulses, like an angry boil. This “boil” is called the “shadow.” Both the “anima”/“animus” and the “shadow” reflect unmanifested aspects of the soul that have a terrific drive to be expressed.

The “personal” level of development is very security-oriented, power-focused and status-conscious. And in relationship, the effort is to end the terrible sense of separation/isolation through trying to fuse with another person as if they were God.

While this is clearly “putting false idols before God,” when at the “personal” level of development, it seems the only solution to separation. Always the goal is to achieve a sense of belonging, of oneness, of “right placement” (next to God). The result is a plethora of pathologies in their relationships.

For some, the relationship is one of counter-espionage, for others it is simply a non- possibility. For others, it is a “magnificent obsession,” while for some, it is a “serve-aholic” scenario, and for many, it is a process of resentful parenting.

Some can’t form a real commitment; others are enslaved to their mother. Some are convinced that they deserve nothing but to harm themselves and to get the bare minimum of attention they need, while others never grow up and try to con/charm their way through life.

Meanwhile, others are chronically rebellious, some are systematically obnoxious in the belief that it is the only way to connect, and still others make a specialty of vengeance. Some believe they are “unfit for human consumption,” and others believe that they caused World War II.

Some feel that they have to avoid intimacy at all costs while compulsively contributing, while others feel that they have no rights of their own. Some are professional rescuers, others are walking cerebrums and still others are spotlight-addicts, all out of the conviction that whatever it is they are doing is the only way to meet their needs. And some play the role of the seductive-destructive “infantile tyrannosaurus,” while others totally throw in the towel on relating at all.

Underlying this whole process is an extremely painful sense of separation – from other people, from the physical environment, and most especially from God. Relationships for people on the “personal” level of development vary all over the map in their manifestation, depending on how they have handled their sense of separation and their developmental history. Most have a kind of “détente” with their intimates arising out of the firm conviction that they really have no one but themselves to rely upon, bottom line.

For people on the “personal” level of spiritual development, love is seen as a completion, a religious experience, a spiritual aspiration, a quest for the “Holy Grail.” This leads to the “romantic love” phenomenon that will be discussed more fully later.

Romantic love is primarily a more sophisticated process than that of the “pre-personal” person. It is in effect seeking God in the partner - the only place we allow God

to have any real say in our highly rationalized culture. It starts with the mother's womb, and then it transfers to any and all who seemingly withhold the "Golden Orb" of union with God (on the unconscious level).

Since the parent(s) are also on the "personal" level of development, the parents see themselves as separate from the infant/child, and the individual comes to the conclusion that they have to get the most rejecting parent to come through for them, lest they spend their life in utter isolation and desolation, due to the deprivation of the fusion experience with God.

Their soul projects to the Infinite - and destroys the relationship - when the soul tries to re-unite with God through a projection of the unexpressed aspects of itself such as the anima/animus and the shadow onto the partner.

This type of "narcissistic personality" abounds as we shift from an extreme "personal" level, causal precision, mechanical modernity model of the world into a transpersonal, universal and God-serving culture.

As the individual matures spiritually, there develops more and more of a "transpersonal" level of functioning. This is a state of knowingness of the true nature of the Universe and of a state of union with all.

There is an "observing ego" who oversees all that happens like an elevated periscope. Pragmatics are handled, but they are experienced as manifestations of the universal processes, and their primary goal is to unite with God as much as possible.

There is a deep awareness of the oneness of everything and of the illusoriness of isolation /separation. Life is experienced as a growth experience for the soul, with total commitment to and cognizance of the Cosmic Laws. In a sense, they are in constant union with everyone. Relationships are regarded as teaching media for both of the souls involved.

People on the "transpersonal" level have turned inward to find the Source within themselves, for that is where it is. We are all like pieces of a holograph - fuzzy representations of the whole Source.

By utilizing the technology and priorities of the development of the spiritual purpose of life, one finds reverence for the sacred and true humility. More and more connections with the Source within and without occur, and there is less and less sense of separation.

Other people then become manifestations of God - other "chunks of oneself." Agape - unrequiring and unrestricted love and altruism are the result, and relationships become an occasion for communion with God through relating to the God within yourself and in your partner.

Life then becomes a matter of devotion to one's destiny and Divine purpose, while the soul expands itself through experience on the physical plane.

ROMANTIC LOVE

As was indicated, romantic love is the West's answer to the spiritual quest. It is an idealization of the "vive la difference!" polarity between the genders created by biology's need for a reproductive system.

It becomes the fuel for the projection of all unexpressed and incomplete aspects of the self onto the partner in the form of a set of hopes and expectations that could never be met by a human being on the Earth plane.

The "thrust of lust wave" weaves Maya's illusions to the max. It operates out of desperate neediness and impossible dreams. It is pure egoism and fantasy which can only exist outside of a truly committed relationship.

It was born in the Middle Ages when frustrated wives of boorish nobles, who were always away at warfare, drew up a code of principles and behavior for the idealization of the romantic relationship which by definition was never to come to consummation.

Romantic relationships are based upon a "magical" picture of who the partner is and what they can do for you. It is composed of a set of addictions, a set of iron-clad requirements of the other person.

When these requirements can't be lived up to, a tremendous betrayal-rage and blame throwing reaction occurs in which the partner is held responsible for all your separation miseries and your personal neurosis play-outs.

Little children engage in magical attribution - the expectation that the parents are the local representatives of God with wizardly powers. When anything goes wrong in their life, they feel that "God" has turned on them or been too self-involved to be concerned.

The result is a lot of "trauma drama" about "You hurt me! You don't care about me!" Unmet demands and anticipations become the occasion for virulent and perhaps even violent combat events.

"Being in love" is a rush of excitement based on the activation of all your desperate hopes and desires for union and completion. The trouble is that passion fades, and the underlying self-rejection and despair replaces it.

All your ambitions and ambivalent dependence flares into flames, and all hell breaks loose. Or, as they say, "the thrill is gone!" and so is the relationship, as the partners settle into a bitter resignation trip.

And of course, there is the devastating realization that you have married your mother/father nemesis figure, with all that implies in terms of your experience of life with them. Sex becomes a power trip, an ego-inflation, a love-substitute, a form of incest, or a burden.

And the whole process plays out until we either jump ship or we jump from the frying pan into the fire, only to have it all play out again. In short, romantic love just doesn't cut the mustard.

REALISTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Self-love is the prerequisite to a successful loving relationship. Integration is the basis of unification. In other words, in order to have a relationship free of romantic love

illusions and projections, you have to come to successful grips with the sense of separation and the suppressed manifestation of yourself.

We are continuously forced by our encounters with “evil” - negativity of experience - into confronting our shortfalls and projections. The ultimate function of “evil” is to master it - to use it as feedback and as the impetus to self-expansion.

The purpose of life is to bring into as much wholeness of manifestation as we can to our soul and the Laws of the Cosmos. Inevitably, our early experiences leave us with limitations and suppressions, along with their associated illusional or delusional conclusions (seemingly realistic read-outs of situations at the time).

These conclusions arise from our lack of wherewithal internally and externally to arrive at a realistic solution, so we end up with firm convictions that do not fit the true nature of the human condition.

Our job is to utilize the challenges the physical plane provides us so as to reconnect with Cosmic awareness and with complete self-manifestation. The “catch-22” here is that frequently, we can only do this fully in a committed relationship.

Which means, therefore, that realistic relationships start with a commitment to use the life-stuff of living together to assist each other and ourselves in the process of self-unfoldment.

The true basis of a loving relationship is two overlapping circles where each circle is an individual soul and the “mandorla” (the intersection of the two circles) is the relationship that emerges out of the heart-commitment of the two individuals.

Each person seeks to facilitate the release and integration of the other person’s “anima”/ “animus,” “shadow” and underlying “wild man”/“wild woman.” The goal of the process is wholeness and union through completion, so that each of them can connect with the Godhead within. Then the relationship becomes a shared quest for union with the Universe, and therefore with themselves and with each other.

There are bound to be temperament and rhythm differences, soul history differences, life experience differences, and destiny differences that lead to conflicting intentions and contradictory experiences.

These usually lead to some sense of abandonment and personal collapse crisis sooner or later as we confront our personal level of development. The strong temptation here is to go into regression and projection out of our sense of incompleteness and separation.

But the real thing consists of going for transformation and evolution through union- and completion-facilitation. We then come out of preferences that don’t decimate us if they are not satisfied, rather than coming out of addictions that absolutely must be met if we are to maintain any sense of survival.

We don’t make ourselves unhappy with our interpretations of things. Instead, we seek solutions and resolutions of things. We nurture and care about each other, with no strings attached.

We respect the individuality of our partner and our own. We live out of our soul, rather than drawing upon our partner’s soul. We come from soulfulness and Cosmic responsibility. We relate to God and appreciate our partner. The “oatmeal” of daily life becomes our transformation platform.

An effective love relationship starts with what could be called a “positive nemesis” consisting of a person whose soul has usually shared various types of

relationships with you in past lives, and whose “planet side” personality this time around has as key elements the fundamental positive characteristics of your parents and the other ego-formers with whom you have bonded, and on whom you are imprinted.

In addition, of course, there are just enough “negative nemesis” characteristics to add a touch of the “Golden Orb hope zing” to your initial “shock of recognition” reaction. However, unlike the true “fatal attraction figure,” the individual is typically “not your type” because of the absence of so much of the negative nemesis imprint people’s characteristics.

Yet there is a set of powerful affinities and complementarities that make for balance and equality of development and for mutual evolution-elicitation and -facilitation. There is a profound shared sense of life.

Quality relationships are a *HUGE* commitment, and you can only make a few at a time, and only one in complete intimacy/spousehood. It involves a lot of work as feedback and events generate hassles and challenges constantly.

It has been found that normal children create an unpleasant experience for their parents on the average of one every 20 minutes! Spouses undoubtedly do the same, though not quite at such a high frequency. It requires continuous vulnerability- and accountability-accepting to pull intimacy off with any success. It is the mutual commitment and true friendship that makes it all possible.

There is the need for constant mutual self-disclosure with no secrets, sensitivity, reality, and no manipulation. It also rests on the possession and activation of a well-developed sense of humor.

The intimate ecology is based upon unconditional positive regard, a loving state of being. Acceptance and admiration are the key, including appreciation and gratitude. Also involved is compassionate comprehension of and controlled release your partner’s and your own shadow, anima/animus, and wild man/woman.

There is caring acknowledgement and validation, involvement and interaction, excitement and passion. Love is joy in being in proximity with your partner, the manifestation of what we value, purposive expression of ourselves and our joint manifestation - not mechanicalness and deadness. The juices are flowing all the time.

We feel fully perceived, validated and expanded, understood and appreciated, even when we are fighting like cats and dogs as we clear out our neuroses and we release our primitivity and our suppressed aspects.

After all, what our loved ones are and do matters more to us than anything else, really. And sex gives integrated and connecting pleasure and it can lead to a “tantric” experience of union with the Universe.

Love grows as a function of the respect for the individuality of our partner and of ourselves, with a simultaneous high valuing of the souls that are “us.” Soul passion - the profound need to connect with God - must be lived inwardly, while loyalty and commitment are lived externally with our partner and our family.

Our children are respected as evolving individuals with souls and unique destinies of their own that may very well not match the models we have in mind about who they might become. Acceptance of life and surrender to God’s, our soul’s and the souls of our loved ones’ intentions and will are the key to the success of love.

However, this does not mean “waving the white flag” of flagellation or capitulation while the world runs roughshod all over you. Nor does it mean pious

Pollyannishness as we passively placate and prostrate ourselves to the whims and wills of the world.

It means a committed co-creation of our individual and joint destinies to the highest level of manifestation possible in coordination with the events and experiences provided by the Universe as our teaching learning-expanders.

You change and grow together continuously, and you support each other's changes and expansions. In other words, you and they transform your souls, and you and they find your destiny manifestations.

The process is one of joining them in the adventure of life, a sharing of the challenges and joys of self-expansion and destiny expression. It takes involvement, commitment, self-appreciation, compassionate commitment, mutual give-and-take, and deep appreciation of your partner.

It is a surrender to the inner work that the relationship precipitates, finding the "us" place, and working to stay in the love space. There is a notable absence, or minimum, of the projection that destroys unity, Cosmic consciousness and transcendent love.

You ask for what you want non-addictively, you take accountability, you follow through on your commitments or you work out changes in your commitments to meet the evolving circumstances, and in general, you learn to accept unconditional positive regard and you relate to your Higher Self.

What love relationships do is to provide the arena in which we can be constant in the performance of our higher purposes and of our righteous duties. This allows us the support of God in your life, and you can know then that God is within us and without us at all times.

In time, we come to find our experience filled with appreciation of God and His/Her Universe, and over time, we work towards grasping the knowledge of the Divine and towards realizing God within.

Intimate commitment precipitates a profound identity crisis in which we are forced to give up our delusion of separation. It is a vehicle of spiritual development in which souls unite and bring each other along.

Spiritual fulfillment is the highest goal in life, and love inspires and supports higher consciousness. We learn to regard the things in our partner, that stand in the way of our unconditional positive regard, as teaching us the self-reflections that need validation and acceptance as we heal our manifestation of ourselves.

They are assumed to be indications of our being out of Grace due to the death throes of the neurotic part of our ego, to external influences, to ego-inflation/deflation, to regression freak-outs, or whatever.

We earn Grace by seeking to live as nobly as we can until God bestows Union and you can connect directly with Him/Her again. Everything that creates challenges is regarded as a "point in progression," not as a life sentence. We become bonded beings working on union with God.