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The Meaning of Love

By Vladimir Solovyov



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"The meaning and worth of love as a feeling is that it really forces us, with all our being, to acknowledge for another the same absolute significance that, because of the power of egoism, we are conscious of only in our own selves. Love is important, not only as one of our feelings but as the transfer of all our interest in life from ourselves to another, as the shifting of the very center of our lives....

"The meaning of human love, speaking generally, is the justification and salvation of individuality through the sacrifice of egoism. On this general basis we can also ... explain the meaning of sexual love" (Vladimir Solovyov)

What is the meaning of love's intense emotion? Solovyov points to the spark of divinity that we see in another human being and shows how this "living ideal of Divine love, antecedent to our love, contains in itself the secret of the idealization of our love."

According to Solovyov, love between men and women has a key role to play in the mystical transfiguration of the world. Love, which allows one person to find unconditional completion in another, becomes an evolutionary strategy for overcoming cosmic disintegration.



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Editorial Review

Review

The only modern book I know of that is worthy of its subject in every respect. -- *David Fiedler, Gnosis Magazine*

Language Notes

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About the Author

Vladimir Solovyov (1853-1900), one of the greatest philosophers of the nineteenth century, was the founder of a tradition of Russian spirituality that brought together philosophy, mysticism, and theology with a powerful social message. A close friend of Dostoevsky, a Platonist, and a gnostic visionary, Solovyov was a prophet, having been granted three visions of Sophia, Divine Wisdom. He was also a poet and a profoundly Christian metaphysicist. His most important works include *Lectures on Divine Humanity*; *The Justification of the Good*; and *War, Progress, and the End of History*.

Owen Barfield (1898–1997), the British philosopher and critic, has been called the “First and Last Inkling,” because of his influence and enduring role in the group known as the Oxford Inklings. The Inklings included C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Charles Williams. It was Barfield who first advanced the ideas about language, myth, and belief that became identified with the thinking and art of the Inklings. He is the author of numerous books, including *Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning*; *Romanticism Comes of Age*; *Unancestral Voice*; *History in English Words*; and *Worlds Apart: A Dialogue of the 1960s*. His history of the evolution of human consciousness, *Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry*, achieved a place in the list of the “100 Best Spiritual Books of the Century.”

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