

ALIEN IMAGE OF LIVING ENDLESSNESS

There are but three things that have to do with profoundly being a HUMAN being: There are but three things that have to do with profound consciousness of consciousness; Faith, Hope and Love . . . and the greatest of these is Love.

The awareness of consciousness of consciousness has been the same journey in the long journey of the human spirit through history. Times change, the world changes, leaps of consciousness give a new understanding to our universe and our relationship to the Mystery beyond all we understand. There have always been those who longed to be HUMAN beings, who have risked their being to discover the interior depths that are in each of us. It is a terrifying and fascinating journey. All along the way there have been those who have helped us find our way through the labyrinth. They have given us handles to hold. They have named the experience of human consciousness different things in different cultures. But they have pointed to the same deep realities that you and I are experiencing in our time. We borrow some old words and add some new ones to use as handles in our moment of time.

Today, there has clearly been a crisis in the midst of what people see as that which undergirds their vision . . . their belief and trust in all that comprises their human journey. It has come as a radical wrench in the struggle with what they have known. We have said it is like an alien image that comes in a happening and rips away at our lives over and over again. It is the experience of endless humiliation, weakness, resentment and suffering --just endlessness.

Along with that has been the experience of crisis in our doing. It does not matter what you do --there is a cut-off feeling, of being a total failure. We have called that the strange fire that comes and burns away at one's life again and again. It is the experience of endless dislocation, ineffectivity, depletion and unfulfillment . . . just endlessness.

I think those happenings are happening to people all over the world today. Despair abounds . . . in those who have given up. Cynicism abounds . . . and what you know is that cynics are people whose vision has been cut off and whose actions have been frustrated. In a world that is virtually crumbling around us, however, in every dimension, something very strange is also going on. People have called that resurgence. Resurgence is taking place in the world. In the midst of all the hunger, war, economic and political collapse, the wrenching of local community, troubled families and marriages--there is a strange expectancy in the air; in the mood of the times. And that is not, I repeat, just happening to you and to me and to people you may know. It is happening to everyone all over the world. Hope appeareth where there is no hope.

In the midst of a happening of absolute and total nothing . . . No thing, Hope beyond hope appeareth, and the struggle with this nothingness becomes red-hot. Now remember, this hope does not exist. Hope is the intensification of Faith and Love. Hope is not a functional category. It does not know anything. It does not do anything. Hope just "Be's." Hope is born of

love, and in the lifelong struggle with nothing, or the struggle with a devouring presence that grinds away at every fiber of your being; all your hopes are dashed over and over and over again. It becomes the experience I want to talk about: The Living Endlessness of Hope beyond Hope; that intensification of Faith and Love.

It took the miracle of 20th Century technology to put me, originally from the Kentucky Hills, on a spot of rock on an island in the middle of the South Pacific late last year. I had been on a trip teaching in Southeast Asia. I was tired and anxious to be home in time for Christmas, but nothing was going to stop me from seeing Majuro.

While I was there, I had a chance to go in a boat over to a tiny island, Rong, Rong, where our work in Majuro first began. One afternoon I walked through the path in the jungle down to the oceanside. The sea roared against that side; it was much different from the stillness of the lagoon side. I stood there and threw rocks into the ocean. What is it about the sea that sets in motion incredible reflection?

I had been on a trip where once again I had sensed myself a failure, though we had had fine seminars. I was angry at having been asked once again to experience that. I was disappointed that things once again did not happen as I had hoped they would. There is just so much to do. And here, I had seen this place stuck in the middle of the Pacific Ocean where forgotten people live.

"This is where we intend to do something?" I thought. There is just not enough of me to get anything done in this world. There are not enough people who care to ever make a difference in an unknown spot like this. I do not have the strength to keep going the rest of my life against such odds as I encounter -- such disappointment, such frustration. I found myself saying, "I've seen it all. There is no more I can see, even though there is much I have not seen. No more. And this is all absolutely nothing! This nothing is all there is ever going to be. This is the way it will be the rest of my life, no matter what I decide to do."

Suddenly, it seemed that everything became very still. At that moment, it was as though the sea stopped moving. My heart stopped beating. I stopped breathing. It is like the moment when a stone is thrown into the air, and just before it falls, it pauses. Then I started walking back through the jungle. I remember singing the song "Yours," as I walked along.

Hope is the experience of the lifelong struggle of giving up all your hopes: intensifying your struggle with the alien image and the strange fire: The Dark Night of the Soul and the Long March of Care.

When humiliation and dislocation are intensified, you have the experience of everything becoming mystery -- the presence of mystery. One is present in absolute isolation. There seems to be an invisibility, a haze in all. There is nothing left but mystery to any relationship. We hope for whole relationships all through our lives. We get married and set out to build a fine relationship like a line always moving in a gradual upward direction. When you sense yourself in this state of intensified humiliation and dislocation, all relations fail. Each relationship brings its own mystery and its own surprise. It is like seeing through people as you talk to them. It is like always being

a stranger in a foreign land where you cannot speak the language.

I have been married to Don Moffett for 23 years, and I feel like a total stranger to him and he, a total stranger to me. There is no whole relationship -- just sheer mystery and surprise in every encounter with him. Last Sunday, after I arrived here I thought, "I'll please him; I will call and see how things are. He will really like that." So, I placed my long distance call and his first words to me were, "Why the hell did you call collect? Why didn't you use your credit card?" I felt as though I were an astronaut whose connecting cord to the capsule had been snapped. There I was, left to float forever in weightlessness -- totally cut off.

When weakness and ineffectivity are intensified, you experience Ceaselessness. You hope your participation will make a difference; yet every single time you have a great idea, nobody listens. You thought you had some special expertise to offer to a situation and nobody even asked your opinion. When you have poured everything you have into a situation for years and then you have to leave it, you discover that not only can they do without you, but others will finish what you have worked on for so long. There is the sense that you are replaceable -- you were not necessary at all. You become aware that if you spend your whole life doing something about this world, you are going to die and there will be the same misery, the same suffering that exists now. So why not commit suicide?

When resentment and depletion are intensified, you experience utter non-existence. You sense that a loud "NO!" has been said to your whole life, and you do not even have the strength to be angry. You are just nothing. You had hoped you would be a winner; that your creativity would come to full flower. These No's come in very ordinary events. I will never forget one of the first songs I wrote. I was so proud of that. I had poured my experience of life into those words. I walked into the room one day and some people were sitting at a table CHANGING some of those words. When I walked in, they looked up and said, "Do you think she minds if we change some of the words of her song?" I gave them one of those sincere grins which is really a form of gritting your teeth. I felt I was rubbed out. I wasn't even there . . . non-existence.

When suffering and unfulfillment are intensified, the presence burns through you, and you are totally consumed. This is the final intensification of all these in which all of your knowing and doing are consumed. You become the presence of that presence. You become aware that it is never going to be any different. Your dreams, your yearning, your fondest wishes are never going to happen. You are totally conquered. BUT . . .

Hope knocks at the door, and says . . . "You want me to come and stay with you forever? I will do that if you will allow me to be the only relationship, the only power, the only accomplishment, the only presence in your life. If you relinquish your hold on your relationships, your human powers, your fine accomplishment, I will stay with you forever. You will participate in my relationships, in my power, in my accomplishment, in my presence." The Presence of being itself, dressed in the garb of Hope, becomes my presence. My hope in my significance vanishes. The nothing becomes everything.

But what about the final Hope that you and I have . . . to live forever? I have a friend who is dying. In her dying, in your dying and in my dying, where is hope beyond Hope? In death, certainly there is no hope of living. Dead is dead! What there is, is that same strange promise of Hope which has knocked; of Being itself that offers and allows my endless participation through its endlessness. It is as though Being has shared with me a part of its being. Although your life and my life will be taken away, that participation in being is never taken away. That participation is endless. I do not want this to sound ethereal to you.

What I am talking about is my life and your life. Now, if you ask me what that literally means, I would tell you that I do not know. Who does, any-more than I, really know what life is about; for life is as mysterious as death!

You have always wanted to be happy -- the joy of living endlessness. It comes to me as sheer relief in the midst of its unbelievable pain. Leaning out over nothing and knowing you will not fail, to give up one's own hopes about the future and to hand them over to Hope beyond Hope, a Hope that will never let me down -- it is just sheer relief, a joy I never anticipated.

I think of the energy of my life I have used, the tears I have cried, the heartbreak I have experienced because I could not have what I had hoped for and wanted in this world. I just wish someone had told me all this when I was twenty years old. To give up your hope to this conquering presence is to live instead in constant expectancy, anticipating every single moment -- every moment "brimming with wild vibration."

Now, the strangest irony of all. There are just three things in life: Faith, Hope and Love. And the greatest of these is Love. If you were just going to know, believe and trust, you would not have to join existence. If you were just going to be presence and joy, you would not have to join existence. But, if you are going to Love, then your participation in existence is required. The consuming presence is your chosenness and in your joy, it puts your feet firmly on the ground, in this world. Your endless suffering and your endless unfulfillment become the endless presence of Hope in a world where there is no hope. Your participation in this endless presence gives Hope to the world, Hope beyond hope. Where there is no hope, I am expectation. Where there is no faith, I am belief. Where there is no love, I am care.

And the greatest of these is Love.

--Mary Warren Moffett

7/25/75