

BEYOND BELIEFS – Part II

(last in a two-part series)

The first in this two-part essay noted two frequently asked questions, and addressed why the answer to both is “No.” The questions are: Is the concept of innate health emerging from an understanding of the principles of Mind, Consciousness and Thought contrary to religious teachings? Isn’t the “spiritual nature of life” referenced in literature about innate health a “religious teaching”, and aren’t the principles “religious doctrine”?

Implicit in those questions are two deeper questions: Why is it that the pursuit of principles, what might be called the simple, deep structure of life, leads to the spiritual realm? And why does the spiritual realm lead people to “religious” expression?

This phenomenon is clearly not particular to the work of Principles-based practitioners. Think of the writings of the astronauts, once they recognized and saw for themselves the unique beauty of Earth in space and connected with the motion of the universe. Think of the statements of scientists through the ages who grasped the grace and lawfulness of the order governing the physical world, even the order of chaos.

The spiritual nature of life, understood through our ability to think and thus shape and articulate truth for ourselves, is the fundamental impetus for all religions. It inspires the natural inclination of people to give form to their deepest feelings of reverence for creation and to their acceptance of the universal mysteries that lie beyond beliefs. More than that, it illuminates the natural flow of the formless, infinite energy of creation into all the forms in the universe, including the endlessly variable forms generated by the human imagination.

What is meant by the idea of something universal that is “beyond beliefs”?

Let’s say we asked a group of young people from many different cultures to describe or draw a picture of God. The result would be many different depictions, from a kindly old white man with flowing hair and beard wearing white robes and extending a hand in blessing, to a rotund, bald, seated figure smiling inscrutably and gazing into the distance, to spindly, alien-looking creatures dancing about. Except to those who had drawn or described the particular forms according to their own ideas, the pictures might not immediately be recognizable to people from other cultures as pictures of ‘God’. The pictures all would represent beliefs.

Let’s say we asked the same group of young people from many different cultures to describe or express the “sense” of ‘God’. The result would point to a universal state that would “feel” the same to all. Regardless of how ‘God’ looked to each of them, the feeling would be immediately communicable and recognizable across all cultural differences.

There might be many different ways to say it, but the thread running through them all would be understood as impersonal, divine love. Impersonal in this sense is universal, greater than one, part of all, not limited to the personal.

In the mind of each member of our group, though, there would be no difference between the “truth” they had all understood through that feeling, and the unique forms they each gave that truth when they drew the pictures. Each person’s own thinking had simply provided an image, or a metaphor, for the formless truth they could “see” within their souls. The ability to see truth for oneself and to create such images and metaphors - to express beliefs – is beyond beliefs. It is universal; what is produced from that ability is individual.

The religions of the world are like the pictures of God, profoundly meaningful and important as expressions of divine love to the people who draw them. The spiritual nature of life beyond the pictures, beyond beliefs, is the sensibility that all people would recognize as so deeply significant that they are moved to create the pictures to express the feelings in forms they can share and appreciate in the visible world. Neither would occur without the other. Uninspired by universal, deep feelings, no one would have anything to express. Without the expression, no one would “know” the feelings.

Looking to discover first principles that explain this is a quest both philosophical and scientific, but not religious. Religion is an outcome. The principles of Mind, Consciousness and Thought predict that people will find expression for their deepest sense of reverence and appreciation, but they do not address the form such expression will, should or could take. Exploring the formless power that links us to all creation and to the universe is not contrary to religion, nor does it present an alternative to religion; it suggests the inevitability of religious expression. It also suggests the inevitability of infinitely diverse expression. It is about the electricity, not about the light bulbs. The electricity is invisible and formless, yet without knowledge of it and faith in it, there would be no light bulbs.

What if we asked our group to draw the opposite of what they pictured as ‘God’ and to express the feelings of ‘Not-God’? Not-God in drawings would take many, many forms, not all of them immediately recognizable to others as what they were intended to portray. Not-God as a feeling might find many expressions, but the sense of all of them would be recognizable to all as personal and disconnected from the universal.

Sydney Banks expresses it this way: “God I am, but I am not God.” This passage from *The Missing Link* (1998, Lone Pine Press, pp.79-80) explains that statement: “The Universal center of all things, we call God. The individual center, we call a soul. In the depths of our souls, we discover our divine inheritance. It is not the power of the word or the determination of our might, but the deep and silent workings of our minds which bring the inner self and the outer self together, into harmony.”

One can find this idea in the teachings of the wise throughout the ages. The “deep and silent workings of our minds” is innate health, the always-available perspective that allows people to know the difference between God and Not-God within their own minds, that allows people to understand the functioning of thought and to separate wisdom and universal truth and common sense from their personal ideas. It allows people to see beyond the light bulbs, to the invisible power of light.

The same human minds that can conceive of and express God, can also conceive of and express Not-God. These same minds can conceive of and express anything at all, because thought is a universal power *before* it takes form, just as energy is a universal potential before it is harnessed as electric lights, or steam engines, or atomic reactors. Understanding that we are not the *source* of the power to think, but that we are a *part* of it and that it animates existence for us leads us towards gratitude and awe that we have the gift to think, that we have free will to change our thoughts, and that we are part of an intelligence and a logic far greater than our ability to conceive of it.

A friend recently sent the following quote from Marianne Williamson, which seems like a perfect description of the empowerment implicit in innate health:

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?' Actually, who are you NOT to be?

You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you.

We are born to make manifest the Glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us. It is in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fears, our presence automatically liberates others."

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