

DIVINITY

Ever since time began, man has understood or felt that there is something, or things, that are higher than him¹, beyond understanding but far more powerful than he is. Sometimes that higher thing is referred to as God, sometimes as gods where plurality is observed or believed, and in many other ways also.

Today we live in a largely secular age where religion as we know it is dying out in many parts of the world, not because religion is wrong or irrelevant but because for many the spirit of it has been lost. Evangelism and popular forms of orthodox religion survive and can at times enjoy revival of some sort. The purpose of this article is not to examine the success or otherwise of religion, though, but to invite the reader, whether of a secular disposition or otherwise, to recognise and open up to the inevitability of the existence – and the wonder – of the divine, by whatever name we want to call it, and therefore to the divinity of one’s own nature.

Giving something a name is, of course, dangerous because once we attach a label to it, we limit the possibility of our perception opening up. This is how many religions become limited. The human mind dwells in boundaries and a belief is simply a set of mental boundaries within which a framework of thinking is established. On the other hand, to know something, in the sense of knowing divinity, requires us to transcend thought altogether, to go beyond the intellect and even beyond the intuition. Knowing in this sense is a question of awareness rather than a question of logic. However, the logical mind is very strong with its habitual tendency to discriminate between this and that. Sometimes we have to use logic to undo beliefs that prevent us from being open to a state of awareness that is actually beyond description and can only be known through experience.

So let us look at the question of divinity. What is *the divine*? One approach is to say that anything with a state of consciousness more selfless than our own is by comparison divine. Using the words such as *divine* and *divinity* may make us think of some ultimate state that is unattainable or unapproachable. The apparent unapproachability of the divine is something that spiritual teachers have tried since time began to help us overcome because the barriers to approach lie only in the mind. Unfortunately, many religions have turned this upside down or distorted the truth by instilling a belief that the divine can only be approached through an intermediary or unless one belongs to a select caste or group. This is utter nonsense but for many that belief is real and for others there are still traces of it or feelings

¹ The masculine pronoun and the word “man” are used purely in a generic sense, incorporating both male and female.

of unworthiness that prevent an honest, open and sincere relationship with the divine. Yet the divine is here now, not in some distant place.

The loss of connection with our true spirituality is due entirely to the machinations of the ego – the sense of I, me and mine – which itself is simply a construction of the mind and is based entirely on ignorance. Even many spiritual teachers can suffer to some extent from the ego which may give rise to traces of pride in their teachings or achievements or a sense of criticism of others whose path is different. There is need for the greatest care and honesty with oneself. It is easy, too, to understand how religions have their failings when they are interpreted by the normal human mind, which is inevitably subject to the ego and its infinite capacity for making judgment.

If the divine is in the here and now and is approachable by anyone without the need for an intermediary, should we seek to communicate with it and seek a closer relationship with it? If we accept the temporary nature of the human body and are at least open to the possibility of continuation of consciousness in some form or another after death, we must know in our heart of hearts that the experience of life in the body is but a temporary phase. It is ephemeral and tragically so if a person thinks that the pinnacle of life's expression could be to spend one's final days or years in an armchair passing time alone or in the company of others engaged in meaningless activities while the faculties decline. The ending to our lives must have a spiritual approach or else life will seem to have had little purpose; and as none of us knows for sure which day will be our last, it seems to make sense that our approach to the whole of life should be a spiritual one.

What, then, is a spiritual approach to life? It has to be one where our attitude to life develops the higher human qualities. We all have higher faculties through which the spiritual side to our nature manifests, faculties which both develop and are developed by selflessness, that are capable of expressing the fullest love and which recognise the divine in everything. The spiritual nature of the human being recognises beauty in everything and the spiritual approach to life involves seeing the beauty in the mundane as well as the magnificent. We don't have to pray in the conventional sense in order to communicate with the divine; we simply have to be grateful and take delight in what life presents to us without seeking to hold onto anything for ourselves. All we have to do is rid ourselves of our convoluted ways of thinking that scheme and manipulate people or circumstances in an effort to gain or hold the advantage. Life needs to become innocent – childlike, almost, but without the naivety of the child. In this way we automatically begin to acquire a little wisdom that will develop over time.

If letting go is part of the process, recognising the greatness and majesty of our surroundings is another. When we see the night sky, the moon, the sunrise, a cloud or a flower, do we see it as something ordinary, hardly worthy of notice? If so, we are missing something huge and losing out. At the times we are like that, we stand as much chance of communicating with the divine as talking to someone on the telephone without picking up

the receiver. On the other hand, if we see nature and smile at it from the heart, we are already beginning the communication process. There is a need to learn to communicate with the heart and it can be done with anything. As I write this, there is a vase on the table with some fading roses and some other flowers and foliage. I don't need to hold a conversation with them but a silent communication goes from my heart to the flowers. There is no need to force ourselves into doing anything because then we start manipulating. Simply look, smile and let the heart be open. If you listen without expecting anything, something happens. This can be done with anything – it needn't be a vase of flowers! The important thing is not to think. We all think far too much. Simply enjoy the moment.

In this way, we nourish our spirit. Grand or elaborate words aren't needed. We simply need to be sincere. If we are sincere with everyone and with ourselves, our own divinity starts to open up. *This* is how we truly communicate with the divine – we release it from inside. Whether or not we believe in the existence of other beings of greater consciousness and intelligence than ourselves is not really important. There may come a time when we experience something that makes us at least open to the possibility of that. But until it does, the divine is our own divinity, which is the same as everyone else's. It is beyond the ego, beyond the intellect and beyond the intuition, and more real than any of them. To know or realise this state within us isn't an instant thing, like making pot noodles. Gradually it arises and unfolds. Sometimes it will be clear; at other times it may seem as though it has disappeared for good but it will come back again and be stronger.

That is our purpose in life – to know the divine through our own nature – and we can do that right now where we are.

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