

Monumentally Big Idea #3

The Pulse of Spirit

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In the past two postings of *The Pulse of Spirit*, I wrote about *Monumentally Big Ideas #1 & 2*. Here is *Monumentally Big Idea #3*: The ideas, beliefs and images of spirituality are signposts to an experience of a reality. They are not the reality itself.

Several years ago we started to think about naming what we're doing as "primal spirituality." It seemed like an odd name at first, and it was questioned by some. Primal sounds a bit like "primitive," which raised questions about what we were talking about. It reminded some of primal scream and we didn't have any screaming in mind. Several years have gone by and I am more confident than ever about the rightness of the name. The word primal simply means first. It implies that there is a first spirituality which is innate to human beings. There is a spirituality that's built-in, and that's really the point. The true role of any religion or any spiritual path is to help us get back in touch with how we are made. That

is the true service a religion could bring; it sometimes does, and often doesn't.

All too often a religious and spiritual path attempts to attach its own belief system onto the human experience, as if who and what we are is not enough to live a happy and fulfilling life. Or it poses that there is some fatal flaw at our core from which it then offers to save us. It can be a great relief to discover that when we really get down to our core, we find our primal spirituality connects us to a beautiful and empowering inner truth that is our truest reality. And the real problem is all the erroneous beliefs about our human experience that are pasted on to that core.

There are two monumentally big ideas that address central components of our human experience. Clearly understood, these ideas can lead to the experience of the reality that the ideas are about. Misunderstood, these ideas block the experience of that reality.

The first idea is heaven. Heaven is spiritual home. We were born with the experience

of heaven and it is part of our primal spirituality. It is innate.

Our spiritual home exists at levels of experience and vibration, at a wavelength that goes beyond the physical forms of the world in which we live, and beyond the personality experience that you and I have every day. There are higher dimensions of Being, that aren't just someplace else. Those higher dimensions of Being are present right here and now. And therefore, spiritual home is present right here and now. It can interpenetrate our houses. It can interpenetrate our bodies. Spiritual home is right here. It is primal to our experience and to what we can share as human beings.

The second monumentally big idea is God. There are all kinds of ideas about what God is. The most essential part of the idea of God is Being. It is the idea that was once pervasive: that the world in which we live and the universe itself is not just matter, and it's not just energy. It is alive. It is a living soul. We are living souls. We are Being. We are not just energy or consciousness or matter.

Through spirituality and religion people have fought about their ideas concerning something that is a reality. Take the word *God*. There is a reality of Being relative to ourselves, Planet Earth and the universe. Through religion and spirituality, human culture has generated ideas about God. It has given names to the Being that is within all things. And then many religions and spirituality have sought to persuade others to accept those names and ideas. They have claimed that their names and ideas deserve to be worshipped by others. Usually, they are not, and so conflict ensues.

The same thing happens with the word *heaven*. People take that word and the idea of heaven and act as if the word and their idea about heaven is the reality. Of course, the corollary to that is, if your idea is different than their idea, your idea deserves to be castigated. And maybe you too. It's a worship of ideas, not reality.

A word or an idea can potentially connect us to a reality. A word can provide a window into an experience and a knowing. Or it may not. How would it be if we understood that whatever ideas we have about reality, that those ideas are just that? They're ideas.

I had the pleasure of addressing The Deepening course at Sunrise Ranch recently. I drew a diagram on a flip chart of how we are made and took great delight in saying, "It's just a diagram." Whatever belief you have about spirituality, it is just a diagram, an idea, or an image in your mind.

The lack of knowing of this is getting humanity into big trouble. It is obvious enough how religious belief gets people fighting over the ideas in their head, as if the ideas were the reality that we are supposed to venerate. But it's also true that the spirituality and religions of the world have assumed an authority over this realm of people's individual lives. To the degree that anyone submits to that, it has a profound effect. And whether you consider yourself as an Emissary of Divine Light, a Muslim, a Catholic, a Jew, or a Buddhist, I believe we all need to take back our spirituality. To live a creative life, we have to own it for ourselves, and know it deeply for ourselves.

The coin of the realm when it comes to spirituality is not ideas, and it's not belief,

even though ideas and belief can be useful. The coin of the realm in spirituality is knowing and experience. Actual knowing! And you can't know something vicariously through someone else or through a religious faith or spiritual path. Ultimately, you can only know something through your own consciousness. Is that not true? You have to embrace that *knowing* for yourself and have firsthand contact and firsthand knowledge of what is true.

So what would your life be like if you knew that whatever ideas you had about spirituality—good or bad—were just ideas? Ideas that don't deserve to be worshipped but might be usefully employed to create an experience of actual contact with the Divine.

How would it be if we had a sense of fun and play about the words we use and the images we invoke, knowing that we were using those images and ideas for a larger purpose: to know something greater in actual experience, and then to share that together? To celebrate that together. To be in touch with that together. Do you think there is some way that we could use the words we speak to one another and the rituals we create for these purposes—even if the occasion is something as simple as having dinner together—to touch something that is ineffable and to bring the ineffable into the practical, everyday experience of our life? What could we do together in that way to magnify our own energetic contact, our own awareness, our own appreciation for that ineffable reality, as we experience it within ourselves, as we see it in one another, as we celebrate it in groups of people and ultimately as we celebrate it as the human race?

I suspect that in virtually every spiritual practice and religion around the world there is a teaching that says, “Don't take your own ideas so seriously, and don't take your interpretation of this teaching or this practice so seriously, because if you do, it's ultimately a trip of ego and personality.”

There is something within any true teaching that you ought to know. If it's Christianity, surely, there is something to know within Christianity that's deeper and more profound than the surface belief in Jesus Christ, or in the image of Jesus Christ that might be in a portrait of him on the wall of the church or in a stained-glass window. For Christianity, there is a deep Christianity, there is a profound Christianity of transcendent love, surely, for that *is* what the man lived and taught.

If you looked around the world, within every true teaching, there's a deeper teaching born out of a deeper knowing. In fact in many religions, there's been a breakaway sect laying emphasis on the actual knowing and experience of what may have become “surface” in the religion. There are the Sufis, the gnostic Christians, and Ernest Holmes' Science of Mind. Of course, for many adherents of even these breakaway sects, really knowing can erode and become believed and not experienced.

Here are some teachings from around the world that point to this a deeper knowing that is beyond belief. They constitute a secret code, hidden in plain sight within all true religion and all true spirituality, that tells the follower the key to how all the rest of the teaching is to be understood.

*The Tao that can be told
is not the eternal Tao*

Monumentally Big Idea #3

*The name that can be named
is not the eternal Name.*

~ Lao-Tzu

*When the wise man points at the
Moon, the idiot looks at the
finger.*

~ Confucius

*I am the infinite deep
In whom all the worlds
Appear to rise.
Beyond all form,
Forever still.
Even so am I.*

~ Unknown Hindu
Master, 4th or 5th
Century B.C.

*Ye shall make you no idols nor
graven image, neither rear you
up a standing image, neither
shall ye set up any image of
stone in your land, to bow down
unto it: for I am the LORD your
God.*

~ Leviticus, 26:1

*The letter killeth, but the spirit
giveth life.*

~ Second Corinthians, 3:6

*I have learned so much from
God that I can no longer call
myself a Christian, a Hindu, a
Muslim, a Buddhist, a Jew. The
Truth has shared so much of
Itself with me that I can no
longer call myself a man, a
woman, an angel, or even a
pure Soul. Love has befriended*

*me so completely it has turned to
ash and freed me of every
concept and image my mind has
ever known.*

~ Hafiz, 14th
century Persian poet

It fascinates me that right at the beginning of the Judeo-Christian tradition—sometimes thought to be the standard of do's and don'ts—just as the Ten Commandments are about to be received, God offers the code through which all the rest of God's teachings are to be received. He speaks these words to Moses:

*I am the LORD thy God, which
have brought thee out of the
land of Egypt, out of the house
of bondage. Thou shalt have no
other gods before me.*

*Thou shalt not make unto thee
any graven image, or any
likeness of any thing that is in
heaven above, or that is in the
earth beneath, or that is in the
water under the earth:*

*Thou shalt not bow down thyself
to them, nor serve them.*

And yet, billions of followers of the Judeo-Christian tradition honor the images in their heads in favor of knowing the actual reality. I can imagine that, if asked about it, they would answer that their images are the right ones. But the words of these verses don't distinguish between good and bad images. . . .any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above. . . .

Making images of some kind is inevitable. After all, we have thoughts and pictures that

appear in our mind, whether we give visible form to them or not. The point is that the game changes when you know that any thought or image is not the reality they refer to. At best, they are an accurate symbol and touchstone for that reality. At worst, they become a substitute for that reality, or such an inaccurate representation of it that they block relationship with it.

The Quran speaks of how form can function as a touchstone for the Divine. Those forms may be experiences of the natural world, of another person, or of the teachings in Quran itself. The Arabic word for such a form is an *ayah*, or in the plural, *ayat*.

The Quran says this:

These are the ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, revelations, etc.) of God, which We recite to you (O Muhammad) with truth.

Ayah 6 of "Al-Jathiya", the 45th sura (chapter) of the Quran (Mohsin Khan translation).

Years ago, I hosted an interfaith forum featuring religious leaders from many backgrounds. We called it, *Not Just on Sunday (Or Friday or Saturday)*. An Imam (an Islamic cleric) spoke about the word *ayah*, saying that it was something in form that provided a window to God. He said that, potentially, the most open window to God for a man is a woman, and the most open window to God for a woman is a man.

One of the most compelling teachings of Jesus parallels this teaching from Islam. It is from what is spoken of as the Beatitudes:

*Blessed are the pure in heart:
for they shall see God.*

Could Jesus be speaking about the same reality named by Islam as an *ayah*? Could he be speaking about allowing the forms of our life to become so transparent that they become a window of the Divine?

If it is true that within all the great religions and spiritual paths of the world there is a secret code, hidden in plain sight, that tells followers that the forms of their life—even the forms of their religious thought and practice—should be seen as a window to an actual knowing of God, and heaven, which is the home of God. What would happen if that secret code was shared widely? Said more casually, *Don't take your religious ideas and practice so seriously! Take seriously the reality they bring you to.* This is *Monumentally Big Idea #3*.

I look forward to encouraging people from any faith, any spiritual path, or no spiritual path, to embrace this true teaching.

I invite you to participate with me in a scholarly study that finds this secret code in religious and spiritual teachings around the world. I see great potential in gathering with people from whatever faith who are ready to see their own spiritual practice and belief in this way. What magic could occur!

This could only be done in a spirit of respect and honor for the people who follow a particular spiritual path. But somewhere in that respect and honor, there also has to be disrespect for our tendency as human beings to worship an idea or image as if it were reality itself. And I do believe that if you are a Muslim, and you adopted that attitude,

and if I was a Christian, and adopted that attitude, we would find ourselves worshipping in common the one real God, the one real reality of Being that's in all people. In doing so, we would touch the basis for our oneness as humanity and stop being so ignorantly divided by what? Our images and beliefs. We are not divided by the reality that's behind the images. And if our worship was of the one reality, we would be brought together in love so easily,

because that one reality is Love, after all. It is constantly inviting us together as humankind. It's constantly inviting us together as human beings, into a knowing of Oneness.

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