

Sermon

DEFINE THE DIVINE (The God Dream)

July 20, 2010....4 o'clock in the morning I abruptly awoke from a dream that shook the foundation of my belief system for a while.

I was in a very large religious building of an unknown denomination. Walking through the administration wing, which was huge and multi leveled with corridors and rooms all over the place, a veritable maze. No one was there....no one in the halls, all the rooms were empty, not just empty of people but empty of furniture as well. There was no sign or symbol of a religious nature, but in the dream, I knew it belonged to a religious organization.

As I was beginning to look for the way out, suddenly a man appeared coming down the hall toward me. Nothing outstanding about him, just a man, and he was ignoring me and going to walk past me, when I stopped him and asked for directions out of there. He politely (impersonally) told me to follow him.

We quickly arrived at an exit and I was looking out over what appeared to be a desert landscape. As he was about to walk away I suddenly got this extremely anxious feeling and pleaded with him to wait as I needed to ask him a question. He said nothing, but stopped. The words came out as if dredged reluctantly from the depths of my being as I told him I was not a believer in God but felt wrong about that and really deep down in my soul wanted to believe. I told him "I have tried, but I cannot believe in God. Please help me to believe, show me how to believe." This huge, empty feeling deep in the pit of my being, welled up inside me and turned loose a torrent of emotion as I literally begged for his help in finding out how to believe in God. In the dream, I was desperate to get an answer.....That's when I woke up, abruptly, sat straight up in bed and began thinking furiously...because

consciously, a desire to believe in God is far from what I want. But that dream, really rattled my cage!

ANALYSIS

I've done some research on dream analysis. I make no claims of being an expert, but here is what I have come up with so far. Buildings are frequently metaphors for the self in dreams. So, this metaphor was indicating that I have a large empty place in myself. Also, at the exit from the building was a desert landscape, more emptiness. In this dream was an immense desire to find an answer to my unbelieving. Consciously, I cannot believe in a God as configured in the Christian or Jewish texts. So what is it that I want to believe so strongly? Consciously I have been forging ahead, preaching and talking about the value and belief in Namasté, the recognition of the "spark of the divine" in each of us. But unconsciously, in the back of my mind has been this question banging at the door, "what does that mean? What is the "spark of the divine?" Perhaps that dream was this unconscious question, begging desperately to be released and considered. Conscious thoughts versus unconscious thoughts. Let me offer you a quote: "*The unconscious mind is much more powerful, much more insistent, much more directive and conservative than the conscious mind; because the conscious is merely the educated mind which adjusts itself to the environment.*" I am quoting Jiddu Krishnamurti, an [Indian](#) writer and speaker on philosophical and spiritual issues who died in California at the age of 90. Krishnamurti went on to say about the mind: "*He(it) is adjusting its self, as you do, to the environment, to the pressure from outside, but inwardly it is the same - that is, the unconscious is still the residue of the past.*" Unquote.

And that unconscious mind is sweeping up the residue of past actions and thoughts and presenting them in the dream world full of symbolism and

emotion. Packed with meaning for you to take out, unpack it and decipher what it is telling you. Or forget it, ignore it, let it go as nothing but a dream. This dream went so counter to those thoughts I harbor consciously, that I could not just forget it.

As a result of my inability to simply dismiss the dream as an aberration, I have been thinking, and exploring a thought; that the feeling I have been trying to project of Namasté is good and right, but not enough. So what and where is this leading? I would like to believe that there is a spark of the “divine” within each of us. **But, what does that mean?**

Divine implies God-like. That is a little bit too strong for me, I don't believe that each of us has a touch of a traditional God in us with the supposed supernatural powers that a God should possess. Divine also implies a strong spiritual base inside oneself. One of the main definitions of divine, after the ones that talk about “deity”, says “sacred, holy.” All right, that falls in line with my desire to be more spiritual. Does this mean a desire to be fully spiritual? No, that is much too high of a standard, a pedestal upon which I have no wish to live. A pedestal which, honestly, I don't think I could stay upon. But, more spiritual? Yes, not to the extent that I am putting myself on a plane higher than others around me. Spiritual in that I want to recognize that spirituality in each of those around me and honor that feeling. Namasté.

Another dream metaphor is seeing an undefined person, who is really a part of ourselves that we are struggling to define. Under that meaning, the man who I stopped in my dream in that empty building to help me “believe” is that part of my inner self I am striving to understand as to just what I do believe. Define it, show me what it is.

I know what I do not believe. I do not believe in a supernatural supreme being who watches over each person or any nation or any race of

human beings. I do not believe in a supernatural being that cares for the human race, let alone individuals.

Here is a story about such a “God.”

SHARK

There is this atheist swimming in the ocean. All of a sudden he sees a shark in the water, so he starts swimming furiously to his boat.

As he looks back, he sees the shark turn and head towards him. He's scared to death, and as he sees the jaws of the great white beast open, revealing its horrific teeth, the atheist screams, “Oh God! Save me!”

In an instant, time is frozen and a bright light shines down from above. The man is motionless in the water when he hears the voice, “You are an atheist, why do you call on me when you do not believe in me?”

Confused and knowing he cannot lie, the man replies, “Well, that's true, I don't believe in you. But, how about the shark? Can you make the shark believe in you?”

The voice replies, “As you wish.” And the light retracts back into the heavens. The man feels the water move once again. As the atheist looks back, he can see the jaws of the shark start to close down on him, when amazingly, the shark stops and pulls back.

Shocked, the man watches as the huge beast closes its eyes, bows its head and says, "Thank you Lord for this food which I am about to receive."

Not too terribly believable is it? A bit beyond possibilities?

So, what do I believe is possible? Einstein has been quoted as having said "Science without religion is lame. Religion without science is blind." I believe it is eminently possible to blend religion with science and keep that marvelous, emotional feeling of awe and wonder at all the universe around us, explore it scientifically, come up with how things work and what they are composed of, and be worshipful of the fact they exist. Feel the grandeur and mystery of how it all came to be in the beginning. Sure, there very well might have been a big bang ... but, what existed before that? Einstein said "Religion without science is blind." He may have left out an important addition. Religion and science must coexist, otherwise each is wearing blinders.

I think it possible that there is a supreme, or maybe just original, being, call it the creator if you will, who started this whole evolutionary life trend which, to date, has culminated in humanity as we know it today; at the top of the food chain (at least here on earth). That sounds rather primitive, but that is where we are at this moment in time on this earth. Except for this possible creator. This creator, as I see it, could be responsible for the various turns and twists of evolution that wound up as "us." It is possible this creator is still putting humanity through a crucible, a tempering, heading toward an unknown finality for the human species as a whole.

If that is the case, where does that put us in terms of free will? Would any effort we do, have an effect on the outcome of this crucible experience we are going through? I would tend to say yes, we have the choice of taking

the easy road offered through bland meadows, or the high road through varied terrain, a path that could conceivably lead to a better world for the species. a path that leads us to a morale way of life as understood in our society, as opposed to an “evil” way of life. This is the path many of us in this room have chosen once we turned our backs on most of organized religion. Our species, we the human beings, wish for ourselves, our children and all our descendants a peaceful moral world. This may be reached by many paths as the Buddhists teach, or as Jesus said “My fathers’ house has many windows.”

Rather difficult to figure what to do since we have no idea what this unknown, perhaps mythical, creator wants as the end result of the tempering of humanity. Some, who have a natural tendency toward the negative, would say, “Oh well, it doesn’t seem to matter, so look out for yourself and let humanity fend for itself.” Others perhaps, would say have fun and don’t worry about it. Then there are many people who tend to think, “The Golden Rule is a high moral plain upon which I prefer to travel.” All in all, I suspect if this supernatural creator is doing all what we have been talking about, he or it, doesn’t particularly care **what** we do, and is probably only interested in watching how we live and the justifications we use in what we do.

IS such a creator something to be worshipped though? If my thought is true, this creator cares nothing at all about individuals and seldom steps in to change the course of events, except as a particular individual might affect the trend of this evolutionary process.

So we are back to ourselves and that possible spark of the divine deep inside us. Each of us have it within our being, to seriously affect those around us in positive or negative ways. As I see it, those of us who utilize this “spark of the divine” strive toward the positive. We strive to make life a little better for our fellow beings, human and otherwise.

Let me offer you a little poem, found in the 1963 Old Farmers
Almanac:

THE HUMAN TOUCH

“Tis the human touch in the world that counts’

The Touch of your hand and mine,

Which means far more to the fainting heart

Than shelter and bread and wine;

For shelter is gone when the night is o’er

And break lasts only a day,

But the touch of the hand and the sound of the voice

Sing on in the soul always.

Written by Spencer Michael Free

Humanity, for the most part, seems to be driven to find some kind of spirituality, something beyond themselves whether that is a God or Mother Earth or nature ... it comes from within.

So here we are, defining spirituality as something within each of us that drives us to actually improve the lot of fellow creatures who share the world around us.

I’ve been thinking that this unknown man in my dream could easily be seen as an alter ego of myself. He is that part of me that is an unformed, amorphous, shifting, shape, holding the knowledge that my conscious self is seeking; to define what is it that I seek spiritually.

For the greater part of my life, and until just two or three years ago, I have shied away from thinking about being spiritual. This subject has been approached intellectually as opposed to emotionally. To leave the emotions out of such a large part of your life is to close the door on “Mr. Opportunity.”

Being spiritual almost demands the inclusion of emotion. Not to the point though that you are projecting this web of emotion out from yourself to inflict it upon those around you. That is only ego being projected, part of the human psyche that wants to have those near us agree with us and be like us and ... and ... not be contrary to our emotions and beliefs.

I believe the whole purpose of us being here in this building, in this congregation, is to seek not only intellectual stimulation, but the enhancing and concentration of spiritual ministry to each other – and community involvement at UUFVB ... this is the thing that drew me here ten years ago and is highly responsible for drawing others to this Fellowship. We need to be saying at all times, “Yes, we are a church. We support you spiritually. We support the rights of the individual in our community and elsewhere. We as a UU Fellowship can energize people and lift them out of their ruts, live the seven principles as our spirit, our number one goal.

Have I found what I believe in? I believe in us ... I believe in the essence of myself. I believe in that spark of the divine within each of us, some call Namaste’ ... but, I cannot define that spark of the divine ... and, it may not be necessary to do so. It is an emotional thing ... not an intellectual thing, but one clings closely to the other.

Bring the emotions to bear on spirituality within yourself, along with the intellectual questioning. Let us become ... a little - sensuous - about this, and feel and fondle the concept of being a spiritual person in our minds and in our discourse with one another. Let us explore this spirituality, not alone, but together. Reach for that spark within us, and blow gently upon that ember, feed it and see if it glows and warms the soul.

AMEN