

Why spirituality is more important than religion

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When I was around nine or ten years old, I started to ponder why my Biology book stated that we had descended from the apes, when it was clear – because my religion had taught me so – that we came from Adam and Eve, who were expelled from the paradise after eating the forbidden fruit. When they told me the truth, I was shocked. From that moment on I started to wonder how many other things that I had always taken for granted were also religious allegories that tried to explain the origins of everything we see, in a time in which there were no logical answers.

So far, any atheist reading these lines is likely to agree with the message in them, but I must insist again in the differences between religion and spirituality, something that I consider momentous. In my opinion, spirituality is the base of every religious doctrine, and religion is a later consequence, that was created and exemplified by human hands according to their cultural vision and originally based in common spiritual knowledge. Such knowledge is essential to discriminate between the important and the imposed, and that is why people often find answers in spirituality, after years of ‘fighting’ unsuccessfully against religious principles. The problem is that religion cannot explain satisfactorily the origins of everything we know. It is interesting, however, the fact that every culture includes some kind of religious/spiritual tradition, and that all of them –without exception – have wondered about why we are here. Most religions also include the figure of a supernatural creature called an angel or messenger, something that, in a time in which people did not relate in the way we do today, somehow corroborates that the spiritual side of the human being was not invented or copycatted just like a food recipe or an electronic apparatus.

We might think, perhaps, that spirituality comes from the times in which mankind used to stare at the sky every night, watching the beautiful stars and wondering about their meaning. It was then presumed that there had to be a 'superior hand' behind it to create everything that our senses can perceive; it was impossible that such wonderful things had sprung out of nothing. Spirituality is the home from which all beliefs were born: unlike religion, spirituality has not only existed since man, but since the beginning of everything; it is timeless. It is the common language from which the rest of dialects (religions) came up, because human beings are so diverse that it is impossible to hold all of them under the same doctrine.

Religion is commonly understood as the link between God and men, but this varies depending on the cultural prism. Thus, each group interpreted the 'way of the spirit' and produced different stories according to its understanding, just like Jesus Christ did with the biblical parables that dealt with the countryside, so the society of the time could understand them.

Spirituality, on the other hand, speaks about the immutable universal truth, about the light and the real human necessity to transcend, to eventually become one with the Creator. And he does not have to have a face or a specific power; instead, he can be understood as a state that we must aspire to achieve. And while Science (for which I feel a deep respect) believes [itself] to be the final solution of the 21st century and aims to explain absolutely everything—even when there is not an answer, there is still some argument—it seems pretty clear—and certainly it would be pretentious to believe otherwise—that it is eventually impossible to explain the vast universal network and all the laws within. There is a subtle irony behind every discovery that, far from clarifying things, produces more questions: it is a never-ending spinning wheel, at least from this existential level. It seems as if 'something' was playing hide and seek with us all the time.

But let us go back to the religion topic, whose strong point consists of the offering of consolation to those in need. Traditionally, religion has also served to control the primitive

societies by inculcating fear through hell. However, its ossification has made it fail because of its attempt to impose a series of rules that are no longer compatible with life nowadays, and their result is quite restrictive in certain areas which vary depending on the doctrine that the individual follows. Paradoxically, all religions have as a main objective - the search for God, but they are exclusive because they do not allow a global view. Instead, they look for members to belong to their 'club' alone. It does not seem to matter so much the comprehension of the divine figure as much as to strictly follow the rules - a system that is not too successful in a time in which people's frustration at the inability to understand God and his mysteries -partly because of a poor explanation of the Bible and the lack of interest that a material society presents regarding spiritual issues which has completely turned them aside from the religious line. So when spirituality enters the scene, it is automatically moved away [from] because they figure that it has to do with absurd rules, restrictions and old scriptures (about scriptures, is it not funny how such old texts continue to describe perfectly the human defects, and offering a spiritual solution to those? Might it be that we have not changed as much as we think?).

Religions seem worldly when we realize their differences and the fact that many details coincide with stories from past cultures (for example, Isis, the Egyptian goddess, is the equivalent of the figure of the Virgin Mary in Christianity). There is no doubt then that religions are made by men to control men at their own convenience, and sometimes they differ dramatically from the spiritual theories. Catholicism, to continue with the example, is full of quotations that ensure there is no life after death:

"...dead people do not know, because their memory is oblivious, and they will never play any part in the affairs under the sun anymore' (Ecclesiastes 9:5-6, 10),

"...men lie not to rise again, not until heaven returns will they wake, nor they will rise up from their dream. Their children will be honoured, but they will not know, or they will be humiliated, but they will not understand' (Job 14:12, 21).

“The deceased cannot communicate with those who are alive either (Psalms 146:4).

“Plus, with the exception of God’s soul, no soul is eternal (Job 4:17)”

It is of common knowledge that Christianity does not contemplate the concept of reincarnation, and any posthumous communication is taken as a diabolical ruse.

The ideas exposed here could perfectly be extrapolated to the rest of religions out there, but the conclusion would be that we cannot know for sure which is the right doctrine to follow. That is why, outside men’s domain, it is very important to go back to the origins to understand the difference between the concepts of spirituality and religion, to comprehend that the first one is the mother of the latter, unadulterated by human interests or cultural customs through time. Spirituality is the base of the non-carnal life, to where we must return after we complete the physical level. The impact that we will suffer on passing through the veil largely depends upon our learning and comprehension.