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Why the pursuit of spirituality is not selfish.

It is a common misconception and cry against the amount of work needed on the self that it is selfish and egotistical to pursue spirituality. Firstly, I shall take spirituality as God-centred, for this is the only true spirituality, that is spirituality that has belief in Deity, faith, grace and salvation as tenets. Also it is necessary to narrow down the extremely wide spectrum of all that is encompassed by spirituality (the whole of life!) to self realisation, self-purification and what is related to this.

One last qualification. This is meant for those who are more or less new to the whole subject, since it is from them that the charge of selfishness comes, as they give some initial thought to what lies before them. For truly anyone who has gone into it in greater depth, has lived the spiritual life for any length of time, will be able to answer the charge by herself or himself, or perhaps obedience to the Word of God will override the clamourings of the false or lower self.

But it is a shame when often noble and worthy souls who feel they can accept so much of spiritual doctrine, balk at the entrance to the domain of self-knowledge. For indeed, one can take part in holy ritual, have Communion with the Divine, live simply and lovingly, do good works, be generous, abhor evil, and yet when one thinks of pursuing actively self-knowledge, one has ideas of withdrawing from society, from doing good for others and being of help and service, to spend inordinate amounts of time merely thinking about oneself, with resort scornfully to that well-worn cliché "contemplating one's navel."

But we must beware, because behind this may lie a hostile antagonism, the workings of the ego and false self that seeks to turn you, as your true self, away from drawing closer to a fuller realisation of the Presence, the Immanence of the Divine. Much depends on whether you are already involved in spirituality, or have come to a point where you are thinking about whether to commit yourself.

If you are already in a Faith or Religion, then you will have authoritative guidance, either by direct Word of the Divine, or secondary teachings from enlightened beings obedient to God. As you have a need to read this, the Madrian Faith gives unequivocal guidance that will set you at peace. Please ask for this.

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If you have not read a great deal of true spiritual doctrine, nor meditated upon it, (this does not include reading dozens of books, say, on New Age spirituality or Buddhism) then please allow these words to reach you and see whether they are true. You have nothing to lose and what has brought you to read it is your true soul which is always questing and thirsting after the truth.

So the crux of the matter is in the idea of the self - what is this self that we contemplate, what is this self that we realize or make real? If indeed it were the false egoic self, the self that only knows of this world and its empty glammers, the self with which most people identify, then the charge of selfishness would be quite justified.

However, only the Madrian Scriptures have the full and true spiritual doctrine (despite the potentially off-putting nature of this assertion, it must be made as it is true). In the Sacred Scriptures, which are no human invention, the Goddess tells us that, to paraphrase, when we speak of the self, we must discern and differentiate between the two selves that make up each of us: the true self and the false self. The aim of madrian spirituality, i.e. of following the Way of Light, is to rid oneself of the false self, to allow the true self to shine forth until we become only the true self, in perfect union with the Goddess. We may strive towards this in this life, and providing we receive Divine Grace, we may achieve perfection to a certain degree, the full completion not being possible in this world. Even though such a shining state is going to take most of us several lifetimes, this journey may be begun now, to rid ourselves of our faults and failings, to allow the virtues to flower within us.

Now how can it be selfish to strive for perfection, when all the evil in this world has its origins within individual human beings? It is our weakness, our ignorance, our folly, our blindness, as well as malice and ill-will that motivate the actions, words and thoughts that create evil. Whether it is evil that affects only the individual, or whether it has repercussions in society as a whole, whether we are alone or part of a group, it is we human beings who bear the responsibility for the state of the world, since evil does not spontaneously arise like mushrooms after rain amongst a population of innocents. The good people suffer guilt on behalf of the remorseless ones, but the point is not to allow ourselves to be incapacitated by guilt. From this perspective it would be selfish not to strive for perfection.

Thus, if we become more good (and the path that leads closer to the Goddess lies in the choice between good and evil), we become more perfect and in some way the world about us benefits. If everyone were doing this, the world would change into

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a kind of paradise. When one is ready to let go of action in favour of contemplation (whether of the self or of other things) one can be of greater service to the world than by any other means, but this is a whole subject in itself. May it suffice for now to point out that an action or deed can become more effective, more beneficial and have more lasting results if one ponders deeply about the issues beforehand and allows oneself to be guided by wisdom, rather than rash or superficial thoughts. Indeed, whilst we are with the sphere of life that concerns changing the world for the better, and in the light of how badly this can go wrong (viz. communism/socialism), it is worth meditating on the Divine words:

"Change that within you and the world without will change. Strive to change the world and all of essence will remain the same."

Again, a deep subject into which we cannot go here. But what we need to look at is what humanism and Buddhism have to offer. Both use the word spirituality but without involving God, and this is like talking of water without admitting it is wet. To strive to make oneself perfect, to develop the virtues, to become a moral, ethical and noble person without striving for God is like

"winnowing away the corn and grinding the chaff".

(Holy Scripture)

The One Who sees everything from the point of view of Eternity tells us it is empty and worthless. The only true selflessness is to offer one's actions to the Goddess; otherwise one is doing the action for oneself (though the beneficiaries are others), and that means for one's ego, however it is cloaked. It may indeed be better that humanists do good, rather than evil, and in fact none of us knows or can say what the value of an act is in terms of selflessness or not. Only the Goddess knows it. It is quite likely that many of the noble and worthy deeds carried out by self-professed atheists, and doubtlessly agnostics, may in the depths of their soul have been performed in dedication to the One Whom their rational minds deny. But this is no reason to leave things to blind chance, we can dedicate our acts and ourselves to She Who sustains this world and the whole cosmos, "who can see into our hearts and who loves each of us more dearly than we can imagine. It is She Who governs the hour of every action, and who grants its accomplishment, though it seems that evil can be carried out wilfully and with impunity.

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The temptation may be that we may say: "Surely it is enough to be a good person, to have a code of morality and ethics, without involving oneself in imponderable questions or obedience to some higher power when reason provides all the answers I need. Look at all the worthy people who lived good lives and achieved so much, who were humanists."

The answer is that we may pride ourselves on being able to decide all moral questions ourselves and to arrive at an ethical code all by ourselves. It may even seem that it is better than what the established church has to offer. However, what reason invents is never the complete picture, for the reasoning capacity is only one function of the mind, and the mind is neither the highest part nor the ultimate limit of the human being. The pure or spiritual Intellect is. Thus it is wrong to make reason king, for it becomes a despot; its true function is servanthood. Another reason for saying reason is sufficient is to avoid the rigours of spirituality; in other words, a cowardly laziness. Lastly, Our Lady tells us that the roots of the weeds that we need to pull out are too deep for us to manage on our own; we will never be able to make ourselves wholly pure of our own accord. If we are satisfied with a mere pulling off of the tops of the weeds, then we are not without evil, and neither is the world.

The Goddess is so great that we can only grasp a small part of understanding Who She Is - the Mother of All that is and all that is not. How pathetically futile it then is to suggest that the Deity is nothing but a figment of the mind or imagination, a delusion of naïve and weak fools who need something to clutch at. Beware of that awful pride that sets itself against God and do not believe the words of the godless ones - they cannot save you, only lead you down the primrose path in the opposite direction from the Goddess and Heaven.

The essence of spiritual life is to lose oneself in order to be at one with the Deity, for the spirit within us is the Spirit Herself. (But we are not God, nor gods as some claim.) In order to become totally selfless we need to meditate, to contemplate, to become so still that we can transcend the lower states of being in which we all dwell, and also to love our true self, and this is the very antithesis of selfishness.