

Is it possible for a Unitarian to say

“I am God” ?

Try this!

The question as to whether there is a non-material mind associated with the brain or whether the ‘mind’ is only a metaphor for brain chemistry is the central question of the philosophy of mind. But in a sense either way the mind emerges from the brain...or from what?

The standard philosophy of mind answer is that mind, whether actual or metaphorical, emerges out of matter. This is naïve. Matter is an ad hoc concept and this concept has more to do with our psychic picture of the external world than the actual nature of the external world. You do not see the atoms on the page you are looking at, not because they are too small to see, but because you are looking, not at the atoms, but at an image created by your brain – or by your mind – out of data gathered by your senses. This *images* reality. It is not reality, external reality, itself. Accordingly mind, or ‘mind’, does not emerge from matter. In a sense matter, experienced matter, emerges out of mind.

Properly speaking mind, or ‘mind’, emerges from a layer of reality called neurobiology. This layer of reality functions in a manner different from the layer above it, if such a layer has a tangible existence, and is certainly different in its behaviour and in the laws governing this behaviour from the layer called ‘biology’ out of which ‘neurobiology’ emerges. ‘Biology’ and the behaviours associated with this layer emerges from ‘biochemistry’ which emerges from ‘chemistry’ which emerges from aggregates of atoms. The behaviour of atoms is an emergent property of the nature of atomic nuclei.

Where does all this end? Whatever the ins and outs of the Higgs Boson nothing emerges out of nothing. So is there an infinite regression or is there, down there somewhere, a First Cause; this First Cause being, of course, God? Accordingly the human being, every human being, involves a chain of being beginning at the core of his being with God expressing Himself as the individual being and this chain of cause and effect ending with human awareness, the human soul.

So the individual soul, even the animal soul perhaps, is a direct emergence from a God that exists at the core of the individual’s being and, indeed, the being of the entire universe. So, it is a reasonable supposition that when an individual looks down within himself he will see the God out of which he as an individual emerges. Ultimately we are all one with this God and that the experience of oneness with this God should exist is a reasonable high theoretical proposition. Reports of such experiences are commonplace but the above theoretical analysis points to how such experiences *should* exist, are *likely* to exist, as a matter of principle.

Marxist views of religion as social control may have a certain validity but in its purest form religion begins with an experience of God in an individual or group of individuals. Often such experiences may be 'drug' induced. However the above analysis would suggest that this would in no way mean that religious experience induced in such a manner would be delusional. Also such 'drug' users, after some time, tend to seek such experiences without artificial triggers. And, of course, much direct experiences of God are spontaneous and natural.

Where God is to be found and the manner by which He is to be found as described above is essentially the methodology of Thomas Aquinas. The above is a form of his Five Ways to Prove God's Existence. Timothy Leary and other acid gurus describe journeying down to one's DNA; and perhaps there may be some truth in these tales.

Within the context of Eastern religious thought the deepest part of ones being "is what God is." And the deepest part of ones being is the ontological centre of the entire universe. The neo-Platonists, who strongly influenced early Christianity, described how we are constantly emerging from and returning to the One.

Rev. Mark Sheils, one time member of the Cork Unitarian Congregation, once, at a theology seminar, proclaimed that the beginning and end of all religious quests can be described by the words "I am God." Each individual's quest is for union with God. To see God we look down, our minds/souls look inward and downward to see where we began, and to where all reality begins. And we see that we emerge from this, we are here and now emerging from this and all reality is emerging from this.

Karl Popper's Falseifiability Principle establishes that all theoretical knowledge is tentative and approaches an Absolute knowledge that is always unknowable. Is this Absolute God? We can never know. But it is the central mystery of the universe.

Perhaps, in this part of the world, only a Unitarian could claim to be God and still be sane. But "I am God" is the ultimate truth. Even if the orthodox understanding of the unique nature of Jesus' relationship with the Father is true the experiences of ordinary people of oneness with God still exist. From such a perspective the experience of union with God partakes of the Godhead of Jesus but is often confused with it. This is a danger of orthodox Trinitarianism and, in high theory at least, a profound strength of Unitarianism.

If one is blessed with such an experience what should one do? Nothing! Just carry on living. Expect surprises....

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