

The Religious Impulse

Can we bring about an ethical understanding,
a mind that is virtuous, innocent,
untouched by conventional moralistic thinking?

“Do we suffer because we are a divided human race, isolated from each other in beliefs and in primitive tribal associations formed around those beliefs?”

“Isn’t seeking the Divine really seeking our own projected wishes?”

“Why do religions promise a life in the hereafter, free of sorrow and suffering? Is it because we don’t know what to do with our problems now?”

“Is the process of trying to end suffering through religion, through idealistic thinking, actually creating and sustaining suffering?”

“Can we observe our minds and see the fact that thought has created all this, thought that has been formulated into beliefs, traditions, and unquestioningly conditioned into the brain?”

- from THE RELIGIOUS IMPULSE –
A Quest for Innocence
-

THE RELIGIOUS IMPULSE is concerned with the development of ethical and responsible behavior. This book questions the traditional religious process of becoming good, and examines how this process paradoxically cultivates irresponsible and immoral behavior through the inculcation of conventional theological beliefs.

The Religious Impulse

A Quest for Innocence

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Introduction

The intent of this book is to question traditional religious belief in order to discover if it creates and sustains conflict; the intent is also to enquire into the nature of the “religious mind,” a mind that is intelligent, mature, free of belief and all forms of conditioned thinking.

This book will ask simple, straightforward, fundamental questions.

It is the nature of a question to hold the intellectual mind in abeyance so one can *look* at the situation directly, immediately, and unbiasedly. The format of this book has been chosen carefully so as to stimulate *insight* into our conventional way of living. Too often books on religion are intellectual dissertations leading to more knowledge, more speculation, and confusion. Presented in the pages to come are *observations* on the traditional practice of religion. These observations are intended not as conclusions but as mirrors to reflect our state of mind. These observations are not THE TRUTH. They are not assertions to be accepted or rejected but are, rather, a means by which the reader can reflect on and creatively doubt what we have unquestioningly come to believe as true. The aim is to look anew at the age-old process of conventional religious thinking, to enquire into its purpose in living.

This book will not elaborate historically or sociologically into religion. It will not quote anyone to validate its perspective. There is no authority except for one’s own observation; only the reader can tell what is true, factual, by using the questions as working hypotheses to arouse his or her own enquiry. The intent of this book is not to answer questions but rather to raise them. Questioning denies the imposition of any psychological authority and cultivates doubt, which frees the intelligent mind to explore unhindered by conditioned restraints. It is the free mind that has the opportunity to discover that which is innocent, unspoiled, and creative.

The religious impulse is yearning for truth, life. The religious impulse is unencumbered by the past, by conventional prejudicial thinking. The religious mind is totally different from traditional religious thinking and practice.

It is important to understand that this book is not an attack on religion. It is not advocating an atheistic philosophy. Its primary intent is to question the *process* of becoming good, which is the underlying structure of many traditional religious practices. I am in total agreement with traditional religious thinking regarding the need to bring about what we call “good” behavior – a sense of kindness, generosity, cooperation, and love. We are only differing in *how* to bring these qualities about, whether through conditioned organized belief or through enquiry, intelligence. The need, then, is to examine what we are actually doing in the name of love and morality within the conventional structure of religious belief to see if we are, paradoxically, creating hate and violence.