

The Ram Mohan Roy Temple: A Sanctuary for all Faith and all Faiths

Let us find a place where science and religion, theistic and non-theistic traditions, can find refuge, solace, unity, and a common place of renewal.

There may be no final answer to what a human being is, what our destiny is or will be, or the nature of cosmos and our relation to it; and there is even less consensus or understanding of the ultimate nature or existence of the divine. But we must still care about all these things, and it is in our constitutional openness to what we do not know that we inevitably will care about these things. But by virtue of our evolutionary endowment as gregarious and cooperative beings, we must also care about the fortunes of individuals and groups, the fortune of nature, and the future of our planet. As surely as our senses of wonder and awe drive us to understand our place within larger schemes of things, we also experience our concerns for other people at the level of our emotions even prior to thinking about what we are going to do for them. We instinctively seek to empathize, identify, comfort, embrace, reconcile, reunite, establish what we have in common, and build communities. Thus, even before unity becomes an abstract philosophical or mathematical thought, its idea remains as the ground and the goal of ethical feelings, thoughts, and relationships. Thus we find we have a conciliatory and unifying force or instinct prior to reason manifest through the affects.

But what about unities beyond reason intimated again through the affects such as wonder and amazement implicit in recognitions of what exceeds the understanding? Might we find in our studies of both human identity and the universe paradoxes large enough to provide a common ground surpassing the limits of doctrine and ideology and perhaps human understanding itself? —Paradoxes large enough to encompass and absorb our ideological and doctrinal differences and yet remain hospitable to the good will and mutual respect we share with all people through our common humanity? Kant had much to say about the tendency of sublime natural immensities, such as those of great waterfalls, storms, or the expanses of the Milky Way, to suspend us within their grandeur rather than reduce us to a sense of our own inconsequence. Might our emerging millennium find in modern formulations of paradox the ground of a spirituality in which science and religion, theistic and non-theistic traditions, can find refuge, solace, unity, and a common place of renewal?

From “Monotheism and the Concept of Unity”