

What is the State's Role in Individual Spiritual Progress?

Derek Dey
March 27, 2013



Unification Church in Denmark (still called that on the door) has been invited to give a presentation at a conference given by Soteria International. It's an organization concerned with spiritual and human rights. I've scratched together some notes on the issues at hand so maybe some might want to look them over or respond. The topic on the 20th in Copenhagen is "What is the States Role in Individual Spiritual Progress." In case you're wondering, Nobuhiro is the guy in charge here.

Hi everyone, This is a preliminary set of ideas – brainstorming over an invitation to give a presentation to a conference in Copenhagen. The host is Soteria International and they network amongst other things in support of what they call spiritual human rights. They conference, debate, and function with political campaigns, media, and the judicial frameworks, to raise consciousness over issues regarding spirituality in the community. The following is first a response to an e-mail received along with an invitation for the church to participate. Secondly, specific topics are assigned to the seminar which are addressed as such in the document numbered as 2.

These responses were requested to help define the area of discussions for us and only serve as preliminary notes to be further discussed before the seminar on the 20th. There are both general questions and areas specific to Denmark. Denmark is a socially concerned country but holds to a negative approach to religion mostly. Danes are also liberal therefore views on entertainment for example are often also open. It would not be wrong to say pornography is viewed as entertainment and appears on a number of TV channels at prime time. Education is humanist based to the extreme and the Lutheran Church is run by taxation and legislation in the Danish parliament hence they were legislated to perform same sex marriages last summer.

Personally, regarding gay marriage I am in support of offering every human being a dignified and considerate response in life. I do not agree with changing the term marriage. I think from general studies a same-same dynamic has shortcomings and issues obviously. Yet I do support everyone in holding to contractual and social rights. Understanding that this just gets me in trouble (smile inserted here) perhaps this supplies a little background to the thoughts which follow. Feel free to respond as you choose.

Hi Nobuhiro,

I'll address the title and mail first, and the topics posted on their site second. However in general they are looking at the problem of the separation of state and religion and asking if the two can work together. I think this relates to the mind body question in the Principle. Mind is like religion and society is like the body so separation can only be detrimental to overall health. Having said that there are obvious challenges some of which I address in my aesthetics which basically covers the same ground. (In my opinion separation of church and state relates to the period of Samuel – Saul – David and is a problem)

This issue came up in Sweden when I lectured there. The association there saw Swedish culture as being very interested in social cohesion but not interested in religion. The question was, could a society have values and cohesion without religion? In moving to the psychology of human nature and philosophy, one can answer that problem to some extent. However the new psychology in particular examines what the true self is, therefore leading us back to religion in a round about way but these proposals kept everyone happy – religious or not. The true self in psychology, for example is like the original mind' in Principle. And culture is shaped by the true self – the hero's journey as it were.

Anyway, here are some reflections on your e-mail as follows.

"What is the State's Role in Spiritual Progress?"

Persecution: The Unification church has struggled with persecution and repression throughout its history: Obviously the legal cases in America and the denial of religious status leading to Father being put in prison is a violation of religious freedom.

In Britain: After filing complaints against The Daily Mail, the high court in Britain turned the judgment against the church and issued a directive to investigate the status of the church in Britain. The judge made his assumptions based on his own particular religious beliefs. He shocked the lawyers who were the best in Britain and experts on religious freedom. It cost the church dearly and the judgment and proceedings were only later (2-3 years) condemned by other Higher Court procedures. This was too late to be effective, however. What was already evident and what followed were kidnappings and torture/deprogramming of members by families and professionals where these 'children' were actually aged around 30 years of age.

1.

What is the State's role in spiritual progress / religious affairs?

This is essentially the mind body issue in Unificationist terms. The state represents the body (the social contract) where its true purpose relates to creating a proper and safe environment for spiritual growth and progress. The state can not therefore legitimately apply controls or restrict religious freedom or personal freedoms. In any case in any democracy this idea is supported by legislations. However in reality even legislative freedoms are eroded.

Real spiritual growth and progress cannot occur without participation in worldly affairs in the Unification Church model. Theologically we speak of transcendent and immanent worlds. In simple language spiritual ideas need to be put into practice – on the ground as it were. Again the state representing the worldly environment can not function on its own just as religion or spirituality can not function without reasonable expression.

Therefore the state needs to play a supportive role in helping to create a tolerant religious environment. Therefore European legislative practices under democratic principles cannot pass laws etc. against religion or spiritual practices in principle.

A state church which involves legislation of the practices of a church, as in Denmark is not acceptable – churches are not of the state – they are of God. This problem of churches aligning themselves with governments has embroiled Britain in past civil wars where the church of England was seen to have the King at its head rather than God. This opens to violent theological disputes. A state does not govern a church; the theology of the church is its modus operandi – its governing principles.

In Denmark the state-run Lutheran church was legally obliged to carry out same sex marriages. This law was passed by the legislative body of Danish government on the 15th June 2012. It is obvious that some of those engaged in the voting procedures were neither religious nor tolerant of religion. This leads to the same sex marriage issue in general where the process of God's creation defined by dual characteristics and the belief therein is violated. Therefore the autonomy of church is violated.

In relation to this question, the authenticity and intention of participants becomes pertinent to the argument. Both state and spiritual dimensions ask of their participants idealistically, an ethical/virtuous stance akin to the concept of the true self in psychology or holding to the original mind in Principled terms. The authentic self is sought and desired in both fields. Based on the authenticity of the self both religious and state/secular areas need to begin a journey towards meaningful and mutually supportive participation.

Recent discussions from 'The Freedom Society' moreover relate state / spiritual matters to the a concept of the Garden of Eden. I.e. if humankind holds to innate virtues there is less need for governance in that environment. An authentic and altruistic self might not need policing for example. The state in this model becomes almost invisible but retains needed governance in areas of certain contractual obligations, organizational elements and some social-care issues etc. but not to the extent that individual creativity is stifled or over taxed. The Garden of Eden concept looks to the innate self to abide by common decency, principles of creativity and social altruisms in a natural way. Therefore government becomes a limited process in this model.

The crucible of the family and character education are a prerequisite for ethical growth of the self and the self in relationship to the whole – this is the concept of the connected body – this move towards social and harmonious global participation requires education in family growth and community. Character education takes account of character and heart, as much as it might also hold to intellectual pursuits. An education of the head alone is not enough to inspire the heart towards virtues. The state serves itself better by taking account of this.

Legislation against any spiritual freedoms is to be regarded as an illegitimate procedure and a 'reversal of dominion', in theological terms. However the response against such violations must hold to non-violent methods. In general the religious communities including our own, hold to the Christian virtues of acknowledging the legitimacy of the state where possible. "Give to Caesar etc." Mark 12: 17. However the term spiritual does not mean naive or passive in relation to injustices.

There is a difference between democracy and sovereignty. Although both terms might open to each in many ways, sovereignty implies a higher and invisible order which needs to be come immanent – implicated into the fabric of

existence. Therefore in religious or spiritual dimensions this reality becomes a significant factor in life and in its unfolding.

2.

Here are some thoughts on these specific issues listed below:

Soteria International cordially invites to discussion on the following topics:

- Should state support spiritual progress? How much?
- Can progress of spiritual health be measured as results of practice?
- Could spirituality be externally supported without becoming dogmatic?
- Is freedom of conscience and belief already sufficiently secured in Europe today?

A. The state can support spiritual progress by adopting a non-intervention yet supportive stance. It can also look to the active support of spiritual progress by creating an ethical ground and an environment which does not obscure virtues. The state and legislative procedures might serve itself and her spiritual communities best by looking at detrimental issues within its own culture. Certain protective measures might be acceptable if say a religious or spiritual discipline posses real threat to the individual or his/her culture. This however requires much thought.

B. Spiritual health implies access to transcendent virtues and realities and can therefore not always be visible – however within the 'faith and works' paradigm much of spiritual health needs to manifest itself where it might. This also relates to the mind-body link proposed by UC theology where the maxim a mind to think and a hand to serve might be applicable and welcome. In this sense faith holds to a certain obligation or responsibility to apply itself to 'good works.'

C. Spirituality in terms of religion no matter how broad the practice is, almost always falls back onto the grounds of dogma. In consciousness studies however, and in general participation with universal archetypes and higher realms of consciousness, dogma does not become an essential criterion and finds itself rewritten as a spectrum of consciousness to which all belong. One can also see that higher levels of participation in any religious parameter open to similar tolerant and accepting views of life.

D. Freedom of conscience and belief. If freedoms and beliefs holds to internal realms of consciousness they cannot be violated. Victor Frankl explained that belief cannot be violated unless one surrenders it voluntarily to an external and threatening force. Even in the midst of utter desolation one can hold to hope, for example – this is a choice available to all. However various forms of pressures, legalisms violations and influences are less than welcome and usually highly pervasive. As mentioned, churches are controlled and forced by law to implement various practices which do not gel with beliefs. Churches continue to be violated, branded, and legislated against. Culture and cultural malaise are also insidious. This may range from anti- religious sentiment to hate crimes.

Education, state legislated, is also insidious in of itself, in many ways. In addition to ignoring character education as mentioned, anti-religious or skeptical sentiments, often denoted as humanism, are applied to children thus establishing a certain – non- spiritual tradition – this from Enlightenment thinking. A legally enforced teaching of the Theory of Evolution, currently in the works in Denmark and in the European Union, violates both basic religious principles and scientific realities. The Theory of Evolution, per se, remains an un-testable theory, not a science. However later legitimate evolutionary sciences discussed as phenomenology, are acceptable. In children, and at an age where full rationality and discrimination/cognition are not possible, this remains a highly problematic issue related to concepts of indoctrination.

In terms of culture how do we evaluate the effects of humanism, perversion, anti- religious sentiment, and general malaise on the religious community in general. Briefly Danish TV entertains us with reality shows at prime viewing periods, given to drunkenness, vomiting, violence, near unconscious sexual participations, nudity, destruction of rooms and so on. Along with unnatural levels of violence in so-called entertainment, do we take this to be a reflection of deeply held cultural values? Do we believe these things have no effect on our families and our spiritual orientations?