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**What Is Spirituality?
Memetics, Quantum Mechanics,
and the Spiral of Spirituality**

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Most discussion on science and religion tends to focus on creation and evolution, at least this has been the dominant theme of the 26th International Faith and Learning Seminar on “Science and Religion.” Yet the subject of creation and evolution is not the only concern in a discussion of science and religion. Other themes are also present: science and the supernatural, science and the virgin birth, science and the resurrection, science and the Bible, science and eschatology, science and faith. In this paper I want to focus on science and *spirituality*.

The third millennium will be dominated by the “religion/spirituality paradox”: the decline of organized religion on one hand coupled with a growing interest in spirituality on the other. Because organized religion is perceived by many to be more focused on religious ritual and church trivia than on spirituality, people are searching for spirituality elsewhere—outside “brand-name” churches and finding it in religious innovations. This demands a reordering of priorities in terms of the spiritual, and an urgent need for a relevant faith. “Relevant” is one of those words that tend toward triteness if not immediately focused. Thus by relevant I mean a faith that speaks to the current and future concerns of our time. Among these are: environmental concerns, poverty, diversity, racial/ethnic conflict, respect for the Other (whether it be God, nature, individuals or the group), and a desire for a meaningful, purposeful existence, to name a few.

One of the crucial problems in the 21st century human beings are beginning to experience—arising out of the information highway and the technological reconstruction of all aspects of everyday life, both in business and leisure—is the technological cacophony and the on-line noise humans are subjected to as a direct by-product of being technologically wired. Wherever people go they are increasingly finding themselves interconnected with others through computer technology and other forms of media on a 24/7 basis—24 hours a day, seven days a week. At some point people are going to want to be alone, away from it all, with all systems turned off. One of the great needs thus will be for “silence,” for “dead air,” for “quiet zones,” where people can separate themselves from technology and experience peace, sanity, and rest from all the “technoise” of a wired life. Such a need raises a crucial question regarding the quality of our well-being in the 21st century. *Will the information highway have a “rest area”?* The answer is “yes.” It is found in spirituality (Rosado 1996).

Statement of Purpose:

This paper seeks to explore a deeper understanding and definition of spirituality, drawing from a number of disciplines: psychology, sociology, theology, physics, and the nascent field of memetics. There are several questions this paper seeks to address. What do we mean by spirituality? How has scientism resulted in a revival of spiritual interest? How do emerging frames of analysis help us to explore a deeper understanding of religion and spirituality that is relevant for a secular/scientific age? How does the new physics of quantum reality broaden our understanding of spirituality?

The theoretical framework that I will be employing in this paper is the convergence of various theories—the theory of levels of existence also known as Spiral Dynamics, the fledging field of memetics, and the new physics of quantum mechanics, plus insights from psychology and sociology. All three approaches will be integrated through a biblical schema that will hopefully result in a new approach to understanding spirituality and religion and their various modes of expression as humans enter the Third Millennium.

But first a discussion on scientism and alienation.

The Bankruptcy of Our Age—Human Alienation:

The reality of human alienation and estrangement from all life-forms and spiritual experience is a most evident social fact in our day. This reality is not a sudden phenomenon but one that has been gradually growing throughout human history. Philosopher Ken Wilber (1998, 2000) gives a detailed and insightful account of the process whereby scientific materialism became the proverbial camel that took over the spiritual tent and prevalent worldview of modernity. From premodern times virtually all of the world’s religious traditions have believed in the Great Nest of Being, the perennial philosophy of human existence (see graphic).

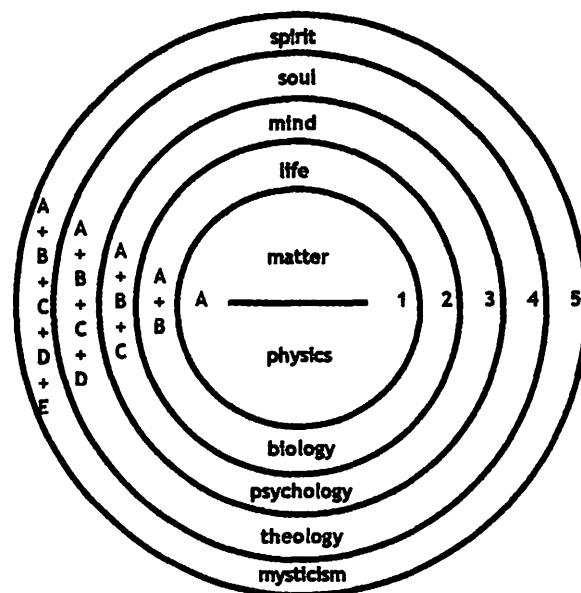
Each level or dimension envelopes the earlier dimension in a “transcend and include” mode so that each higher level includes the lower level but adds new elements not found in the previous one (Wilber 1998:9). The model is one of “holons”—a whole that is part of other wholes—in a holarchy like atoms/molecules/cells/organisms, with each senior enfolding its junior” (Wilber 2000: 12). This is the significance of the A+B+C.... For each level there is a corresponding branch of knowledge relating to it. Thus, physics studies matter, biology studies life, psychology the mind, theology the soul in relation to God, and mysticism incorporates all in a oneness of body-mind-spirit to the Divine.

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With the emergence of modernity, science collapsed the Great Nest, replacing it with a *flatland* perspective—one dimension fits all (Abbott 1984). Here only one dimension existed—matter—resulting in a material understanding of the universe dominated by *scientism*: “the belief that there is no reality save that revealed by science, and no truth save that which science delivers” (Wilber 1998:10,56). Matters of theology and the spirit were relegated to “illusion” (Freud, the father of psychology), “fictitiousness” (Comte, the father of sociology), and “ideology” (Marx, the father of ill-fated communism). Wilber brings out the incredulity of this process.

The bleakness of the modern scientific proclamation is chilling. In that extraordinary journey from matter to body to mind to soul to spirit, scientific materialism halted the journey at the very first stage, and proclaimed all subsequent developments to be nothing but arrangements of frisky dirt. Why this dirt would get right up and eventually start writing poetry was not explained. Or rather, it was explained by dumb chance and dumb selection, as if two dumbs would make a Shakespeare.... The only word that can adequately define this cultural catastrophe is “horrifying” (Wilber 2000:55,56).

The Great Nest of Being



Source: Ken Wilber, *The Marriage of Sense and Soul: Integrating Science and Religion* (New Leaf 1998).

Sociologist Albert Bergesen (1995) suggests a parallel but not as complete conceptual scheme of human alienation that can be identified in the historical process of human experience. Bergesen says that humankind has gone through “three stages of alienation”—alienation from the divine, alienation from the human, and alienation from nature. These various forms of alienation represent a break from a basic progressive understanding of who human beings are: religious, human, and natural or ecological beings.

The original, oldest, and fundamental alienation is from God and emerges in a primal or “Edenic” beginning as a break with the divine, an estrangement from the world of the sacred. Various cultures and religions have different ways of picturing this estrangement from the divine. The biblical description of the “Fall” is perhaps the best known, but certainly not the only depiction of human alienation from the gods. This manner of describing human experience as estranged and separated from God pervaded human understanding until 15th century when the Age of Renaissance emerged. Up until this time theology was the queen of the sciences, and the prevalent worldview had a predominant religious framework. Meaning was centered in the world of the sacred, and priests, shamans, and goddesses ruled and occupied principal positions of power in society.

From the 16th to the 20th century, with global expansionism and the emergence of scientific materialism, the focus shifted from God as the center of the cosmos to humankind as the locus of the center of meaning. Alienation took on another form as separation from ourselves, our work, and our fellow human beings. This was also a period of extreme forms of inhumanity. Fueled by an insatiable greed and an excessive quest for materialism,

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this period saw the rise of European expansionism, the imposition of slavery, genocidal acts on indigenous populations and the reordering of the world into the haves and the have-nots. But such thirst for self-aggrandizement at the core of scientism with its secular humanism already had within it the destructive seeds of the third alienation—separation from nature or ecological alienation.

From the 20th century on the forces of human greed have marched steadily forward in an endless wave of environmental destruction, with little thought for the future of our planetary home. The result is that in the latter part of the 20th century a new awareness of estrangement has emerged, an alienation from the natural world and from our “ecological” selves—the interconnectedness and interdependence of humans with nature (Capra 1996). In a counter move, “deep ecology” arose as a fundamental way of viewing our natural environment at the center of our existence and human beings as “eco-beings” and by asking the basic “why” questions of life. Why are we here? Why do we believe that our present direction is the most beneficial to all life-forms? Where do we come from? Where are we going? Do we have a moral responsibility for the survival, care, and well-being of our natural environment? Where are we environmentally headed with our present understanding of human progress? Is this all we have or is there more to come?

The cumulative result of these three forms of alienation has been spiritual disintegration. This is a disconnected, fragmented social self without a sense of meaning and purpose to life, destitute of a connection to God, to ourselves, to other humans, as well as to nature. There is a natural flow to all these forms of alienation: first separation from God, then separation from ourselves and from one another, and finally separation from our natural environment and the various life-forms with which we share this planet. Bergesen suggests that each form of alienation charges the previous way of viewing reality as a false consciousness, as a myth and the source of pain and suffering. Scientific materialism, in breaking away from religion, charged God and religion as the source of evil in the world, since most warfare has had a religious undergirding. Deep ecology and an ecofeminism is now doing the same to scientism—especially in its capitalistic and patriarchal forms—as destroying human life, exploiting women, and annihilating the ecosystem.

But is deep ecology—the movement espousing the interconnectedness of all life-forms—the final solution to the problems of human alienation? Albert Bergesen and other deep ecologists such as Capra (1982, 1996) seem to suggest as much, by viewing these various forms of alienation in a linear mode: estrangement from God to humankind to ecological. Capra, along with other New Age scientists, is seeking for the solution in an Eastern cyclical worldview. Yet, the reality that is emerging in the human social experience suggests otherwise. What is emerging now is not a linear pattern of development the dominant view of the West, nor a circular pattern the dominant view of the East, but a spiral process that is more in harmony with the biblical tradition. It has one more stage in the process—the spiritual—a return to the beginning. Let me explain. The Biblical model is one of pristine life in the Garden in the first two chapters of Genesis. In the third chapter sin enters world. The last two chapters of the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation, the Bible ends with a return to this pristine world in the New Earth. In the third chapter from the end, Revelation 20, sin comes to an end. Between the fourth chapter of Genesis and the fourth chapter from the end of Revelation the whole “history of Salvation” unfolds, culminating with the cross of Christ as the apex. Thus eschatology (the study of the last things) is a return to protology (the first things), with one exception. It is not a simple cycle returning one to the beginning as in a closed circle or a spinning hamster wheel. Rather, it is an *ascending spiral* that moves one to another level of existence, one with God making His dwelling in the midst of humankind (Revelation 21:3). Thus, the biblical model of history is neither linear (Western) nor cyclical (Eastern), but spiral (both), as in the quantum world where light is both a particle and a wave. John Edser is therefore correct: “Life is not a cycle, it’s a spiral, with quantum steps.”³

Within this understanding history is but a perennial spiritual process seeking a return to the Garden and a reconnection of humanity with God. Ever since our primeval parents were expelled from the Garden of Eden, human beings have been by one means or another, seeking to get back into the Garden. Human expressions of religion and their diversity of beliefs are all various forms and means of human beings seeking to get “back to Eden.” The many religious expressions throughout history are simply the diverse means human beings have devised to understand this connectedness to the divine. What human beings are now discovering, acknowledging, and experiencing is that we are not merely religious or human or ecological beings. We are *spiritual* beings. And we are at odds with the divine, with our self, with each other and with nature, because our human spirit has lost its moorings from God, the source of our being, existence, and interconnectedness. The result has been a progressive alienation from everything else. All four forms of alienation—from God, from ourselves, from humans, from nature—are in their essence and at heart a *spiritual estrangement—a separation of the human spirit from the Great Spirit*. When such separation takes place it is easy to see how human thinking has evolved from connectedness to alienation—from God as the creator of life, to humans as the creator of God, to nature being God.

Our Table of Life:

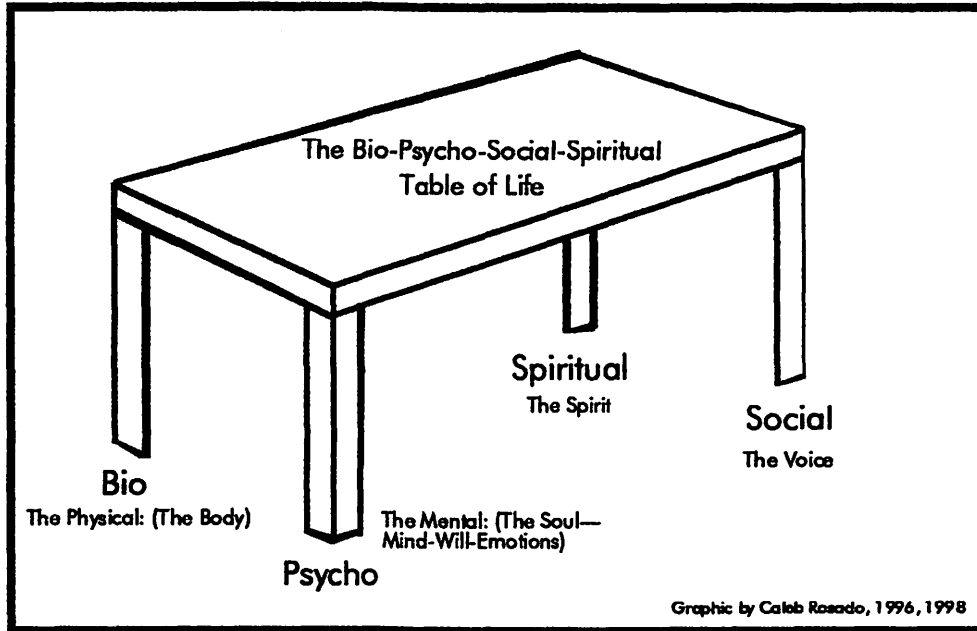
In order to understand this spiritual estrangement we need to recognize that there are four dimensions or components to human well-being: the bio, the psycho, the social, the spiritual. Any semblance of a healthy human life needs these four dimensions in an operative condition. By this I don’t necessarily mean perfectly sound, for

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whom of us is perfectly whole in any one of these dimensions, but at least functional. The bio or physical is the area of the *body*, our physical well-being; the psycho, the mental is concerned with the *soul*—our mind, will, and emotions. The social deals with our *voice*, the means to sustain social relations with others; and the spiritual focuses on the *spirit*, the center of intimacy, meaning, and purpose.

The interrelationship of these four dimensions can best be illustrated with a table (see graphic). Our Table of Life is in balance when all four dimensions are developed in a harmonious

THE FOUR DIMENSIONS OF OUR TABLE OF LIFE



or proportionate manner. When there is a balance to table it can withstand a great deal of pressure and stress, when weight is put on the table. A table that is not balanced may collapse or give way under pressure. A table can appear to be balanced, however, even if one leg is short. For all practical purposes it may look balanced, since this type of imbalance is not easily detected until pressure is put on the table. It is then that the lack of balance is recognized, and whatever is on it spills. Some people look reliable and dependable, but when pressure is placed on them or they undergo stress, they prove to be untrustworthy, undependable and cannot be counted on when needed the most. For most people, especially young people, the one leg that is usually short, or the one dimension that receives minimal attention is the spiritual.

A table can also be unbalanced if a leg is too long. This type of imbalance is more easily detected, since it tends to stand out. We tend to have special names when there is an unbalance in each of the dimensions at the expense of the others. People with too long of a physical leg are often called "jocks" or "babes." If the social is too long, they are called "party animals," "social lites." If it is the mental leg, they are called "geeks," "nerds." And if the spiritual leg is the longer one, they are called "religious fanatics."

While all four dimensions are important for a balanced life, the most important of the four is the spiritual dimension. This is the one that gives purpose and meaning—the why behind the what—to the other dimensions. If one of the other dimensions undergoes transformation or sudden change, it is the spiritual dimension as the anchor leg that provides the much-needed sense of well-being, purpose, and significance. Thus, if an accident leaves a person paralyzed, damaging not only the physical, but also the social and emotional dimensions of life, it is the spiritual entity that addresses the "why" questions behind the quest for meaning and purpose to life. As Friedrich Nietzsche said, "If a person has a *why* to live, he can handle almost any *what!*"

The concern today with the recovery of the spiritual as the fourth dimension of life is an effort—jaded as it may be in its many and diverse expressions—to reconnect us once again with God, alienation from whom results in all other forms of alienation. This desire for reconnectedness with God, however, is one cognizant of all the other forms of alienation, which have resulted in exploitation of both the human and natural environments. What we are seeing emerge today is a holistic form of spirituality which not only seeks to connect humans once again to God, but also to ourselves, to other humans and to the natural/ecological world, our environmental home, of which we

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are all responsible stewards. The result is a coming full circle, back to the future. How did this recent concern for the spiritual emerge?

The Rise of Spirituality:

While it has been developing since the 18th century, following the restructuring of world society after World War II, humanistic materialism and naturalism in science took center stage as the great savior of humankind. After all, it was the deployment of the best of scientific research—nuclear fission—which brought an end to the war. With the launching of Sputnik and the race towards the moon, science was now seen as the solution to human problems. Interest in religion appeared to wane. In the 1960s, with the rise of secularism as a way of life devoid of God, sociologists began to predict the demise of religion as a soon-to-be-forgotten footnote of history. Liberal theologians and secular humanists proclaimed the “death of God.” Throughout the ‘70s and ‘80s Americans rushed headlong toward materialism and greed, including the continued destruction of the environment. This movement of secular materialism was most visible during the Reagan administration and modeled by his “trickle down” economic policies.

Voices of concern from various parts of the world, however, were already raising a cry of warning above the din of materialism coming from the moneychangers in the temple of capitalism. The prophetic voices of liberation theologians, feminists, environmentalists, the poor and disenfranchised began calling people back from the brink of a mechanical, fragmented, isolationist, dehumanizing, disconnected view of the world, a by-product of the industrial society. This was due to the realization that western scientism was no different than the historical materialism of communism, in terms of alienating the human spirit. Both worldviews left people spiritually bankrupt and disconnected from each other, as well as from their natural environment.

In the late 1980s and 1990s people began to turn to spirituality and a return to nature as Green movements became popular. Now in the 21st century, a holistic spirituality has emerged with a global awareness for human connectedness to the divine and communalism, and a realization of our interdependence with the ecosystem. This sense of connectedness, interdependence, and need for communalism is not just between human beings, but also with all natural life-forms, within a paradigm which reminds us that we are all one with the earth. This global awareness of the commonality of humanity was made possible in part by two factors. First, an advanced technology that has turned our world into a telecommunications electronic village, where each instantly knows what is happening to the other. Second, the realization that scientific materialism, instead of being a savior to solve human problems, is in large measure responsible for the destructive dualisms that fragment the human spirit and leave us alienated from the ecological and eternal Other. A new paradigm or way of perceiving our world has emerged as a “global consciousness” focused on the interconnectedness of all life-forms, both human and environmental. This holistic—and very biblical—view of life has a profound spiritual undergirding. Unfortunately, the deeper implications of this worldview to a global village concerned with the impending threat of human/ecological destruction is only beginning to be explored. It now appears that the most challenging discipline of the sciences, Quantum Physics, may be leading the field in exploring the spiritual dimensions of the universe. This is largely due to a sense of awe, respect, and wonder now being generated through scientific discoveries about the universe, at both the microscopic and cosmological dimensions.

The New Physics and Spirituality:

Quantum mechanics (QM), the most challenging and mentally engaging form of the sciences, has given rise to a whole new understanding of reality. Focused on the subatomic world of energy, electronic particles, and light, quantum physics is forcing scientists and knowledgeable laypersons alike, to see the world anew—radically anew. Classical Newtonian physics regarded light as either particles or later waves, but not both. Under QM light is both particles and a wave, an apparent impossibility, yet true and measurable, depending on the conditions of observation, though not always explainable especially as regards its philosophical implications.

This article in no way will delve deeply into this mysterious, “spooky” world, as Einstein called it, as the literature on the subject is vast and quite complicated. There are, however, some implications to spirituality. Several physicists and scientists have written about the ramifications of quantum cosmology, the new physics (the converging of QM with the general theory of relativity) for the spiritual dimension (Davies 1983, 1992; Tipler 1994; Lazich 1989, 2000; Pearcey and Thaxton 1994; Wright 1993; Clausen 1991, 2000). There are several derived insights from this exciting field of study that will broaden our understanding of spirituality.

Quantum Principles:

All reality is interrelated.

Diarmuid O’Murchu (1998:66) declares: “At the heart of the quantum vision is the conviction that all life forces are interdependent and interrelated. In fact, we experience life, not in isolated entities, not in separate units, but in bundles of experience (quanta).” German physicist Werner Heisenberg (O’Murchu 1998:78) first voiced the idea that our world is essentially an “interconnected web of relationships.” This is a most important principle for

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interhuman relations in a socially alienated and spiritually fragmented world. QM, by focusing on the small-size world, enables us to understand the essential elements and components that comprise life at the primary levels of existence. And from these basic levels on up, the basic *modus operandi* of the universe—interconnectedness and interrelatedness—emerges which governs life in our universe. Life is the result of relationships, interlinked, interconnected, and interdependent. Unfortunately, with the collapse of the Great Nest of Being, the scientific humanism that brought this about also gave rise to a reality of alienation and isolation, with an independent, autonomous and separate existence, away from interrelationships.

Max Planck, the father of QM who coined the term *quanta* for the discrete bundles of energy that comprise light, made an insightful statement at the heart of this principle of interrelatedness. “Science cannot solve the ultimate mystery of nature. And it is because, in the last analysis, we ourselves are part of the mystery we are trying to solve” (O’Murchu 1998:78). Danah Zohar (1990:206) makes clear that the particle world is essentially “particles in relationships.” All this is important for spirituality, for ultimately spirituality is about relationships—God to human, human to human, human to nature. This is point that Katherine Zappone (1991) makes. “The pivotal shift in spirituality’s meaning for the twentieth century resides in the birth of a worldview of interdependence or relationality. In its broadest sense, spirituality is the relational component of lived experience.” Even the Godhead models this principle of interrelated oneness, especially the Doctrine of the Trinity. For too long a mechanistic paradigm has dominated an understanding of the Doctrine of the Trinity where people end up trying, as in “jigsaw puzzle”, to fit 3 into 1. But from a holistic QM framework, this doesn’t make much sense. Thus, O’Murchu suggests that “the doctrine of the Trinity is an attempted expression of the fact that the essential nature of God is about relatedness and the capacity to relate, that the propensity and power to relate is, in fact, the very essence of God... God becomes meaningful in the very process of relating” (82). This gives rise to the second principle.

Quantum holism—the world is a seamless, indivisible whole.

The famous experiment by Einstein, Podolsky, and Posen, now known as the EPR Experiment, suggested that two particles of light instantaneously influence each other, even at great distances, in an equal and opposite manner. Here is the strange or “spooky action at a distance” nature of this experiment, as Einstein regarded it (Horgan 1992), for the influence takes place faster than the speed of light. And since no information is known about the two parts of the widely separated system, until one part is observed, then influence on the other part is also immediately determined (faster than the speed of light), because it is part of a holistic system. As Pearcey and Thaxton (1994:204) declare, “The two electrons seem to be bound together by some mysterious unity.” British physicist David Bohm suggests that the two parts are not really two separate parts, but represent an “unbroken wholeness,” which affirms the “interconnectedness of the whole universe” (Pearcey and Thaxton 1994:204).

This sense of holism appears to be what Jesus had in mind when he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane prior to going to the cross. “The glory that you have given me I have given them so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:22,23 NRSV).

New Age physicists, Fritjof Capra (1991) and Gary Zukav (1979), regard this understanding as the dominant thinking of Eastern religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism). They, therefore, view oriental religions as being more compatible with the atomic physics than Christianity. And to an extent, they are right. But what they fail to realize is that the Bible is an *Eastern* book, written from an Eastern frame of understanding, and not the Western one to which it has been made captive. Once one recognizes this fact, it is very easy to see how biblical Christianity has a smooth connection with the New Physics, especially in view of the above statement on “mystic oneness” made by Jesus Christ. Few Eastern thinkers have made as bold a statement as Jesus made. It is the ultimate expression of mystical union with God. The result is that “Christianity is a deeply mystical religion,” declares Ursula King in her book *Christian Mystics: The Spiritual Heart of the Christian Tradition* (1998:10). “At its heart is Jesus’s own experience,” she continues, “expressed as ‘I and the Father are one,’ the message of utter divine unity” (King 1998:10). King gives the following definition of a “mystic.”

A mystic is a person who is deeply aware of the powerful presence of the divine Spirit: someone who seeks, above all, the knowledge and love of God, and who experiences to an extraordinary degree the profoundly personal encounter with the energy of divine life. Mystics often perceive the presence of God throughout the world of nature and in all that is alive, leading to a transfiguration of the ordinary all around them. However, the touch of God is most strongly felt deep within their own hearts (6).

Both Eastern religions and Christianity focus on a “mystical union” with God. Yet there is a profound difference between the two. “...however intimate this union with God is, Christian mysticism never abandons the otherness of God, and the mystic never ceases to be God’s creature” (King 1998:22). Christianity never “deifies” the individual in this quest for union and communion with God.

This then is the essence of spirituality at its deepest and highest levels of understanding—it is a mystical, holistic, seamless, intimate experience of oneness, wholeness, union, and communion with the Divine, who always

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remains the Other, separate and distinct from us. Yet the experience of oneness and unity is such that as in the EPR Experiment, action in one element influences the behaviour of the other element. This principle is at the heart of Christianity, where the redemptive action of God resonates in an antiphonal response from humankind. “Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:11 NRSV). Such response results in a seamless, indivisible whole with the divine. “No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us” (vs. 12). Such oneness is best expressed in the following statement.

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God, as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us (White 1940:668).

This is an example of the highest form of spirituality, for it describes a mystical oneness—body, mind, soul, spirit in oneness with the divine—one seldom seen our world. Yet it is one that flows from the very One who “created” the subatomic world where it is modeled on a continual basis.

It is for this reason that Frank J. Tipler, not only regards theology as a “branch of physics,” but also moves away from atheism to an embracing of Christian theology as true, after examining all the evidence from QM. Here is his statement (Tipler 1994:ix).

When I began my career as a cosmologist some twenty years ago, I was a convinced atheist. I never in my wildest dreams imagined that one day I would be writing a book purporting to show that the central claims of Judeo-Christian theology are in fact true, that these claims are straight-forward deductions of the laws of physics as we now understand them. I have been forced into these conclusions by the inexorable logic of my own special branch of physics.

It is interesting that his rigorous research leads him to regard not New Age thinking but Christianity as best aligned with the laws of the new physics.

The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Since life is the product of relationships, “the quantum world does not operate in terms of cause and effect.” O’Murchu continues, “The whole is not caused by the fact that all the parts function in unison. No, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, yet, mysteriously, the whole is contained in each part (as in a hologram). Cause and effect make little sense in a world now understood to be fundamentally relational and interdependent in its essential nature” (66).

A novel is more than paper, ink, glue, words, or correct sentence structure, so is the reality QM creates (Clausen 2000). So also spiritual consciousness is more than the sum total of the various levels of the Great Nest of Being (Wilber 2000). The whole of spirituality transcends the whole of body, mind, soul, and spirit, resulting in a mystical experience of interconnectedness with the divine.

Two natures, but one entity at the same time.

In classical physics Newton treated light as a particle. But the discoveries of QM have resulted in what many perceived to be an anomaly. Light is, simultaneously, wave and particle, an apparent paradox. Yet, this is part of the previous principle where the whole, being greater than the parts, as in light being more than particles and waves, results in an entity that is different from the other two.

This duality in quantum physics helps us to better understand what to many is the great paradox of the Christian faith, the dual nature of Christ, as both God and human. Traditional mechanistic worldviews have had a problem with this teaching because it tends to be incompatible with a mechanistic, segregated, independent sense of existence. How could Jesus be *both* God and man? Yet, this teaching finds a parallel in the new physics, making the dual nature of Christ understandable from this holistic frame of analysis. From a quantum mechanics perspective, Jesus is “fully both” God and man, just like light is *both wave and particle* (Begley 1998:51).

From chaos to self-organization.

Classical physics theory regarded chaos as the result of randomness, disorder, and instability. Yet chaos theory is finding order where others have only seen disorder (Gleick 1987). The mandelbrot set discovered by Mandelbrot, after whom it was named, shows patterns within patterns, where others might just see chaos (1977).

The research of Ilya Prigogine, a chemist and Nobel laureate, takes chaos further by focusing on the principle of “self-organization.” What Prigogine says is that states of chaos are not end-states in themselves. In reality they are the states of upheaval just prior to a system undergoing a radical transformation to a higher level of

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organization. Natural systems flow from stability to chaos to a re-ordering to a higher state of self-organization. Thus, systems tend to seek self-organization, moving from one level to a higher level of development (Prigogine 1980; Prigogine and Stenger 1984; Wright 1993). Prigogine and Stenger view chaos as a precondition stage prior to the activation of the self-organizing process inherent in all living systems.

This quantum insight has spiritual implications for human development. The human state of alienation from a Chaos Theory perspective is in actuality a “precondition stage” preceding the next stage of self-organization. In the sociological theory of religion, it would be the state of moral and social disorder before a person experiences a need for a new order or “conversion.” Psychologically it would be a state of cognitive dissonance prior to experiencing consonance between belief and behaviour. Prigogine's point, however, is that life reorganizes itself. While that might be true for some life forms, the re-organizing of the spiritual life for human beings, from a biblical perspective, is more the work of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3) than of human self-reformation.

This brief discussion of quantum mechanics and spirituality pushes the paradigm of our understanding of spirituality to a whole new dimension of consciousness, existence, and relatedness beyond the way we normally experience spirituality within a mechanical worldview. This last insight of stages of self-organization and development, especially as it relates to spirituality, leads us into the field of Spiral Dynamics, the theory of levels of existence and memetics, the principal framework in this paper for best understanding spirituality in its many dimensions. And it has to do with culture and value systems.

Value Systems as Cultural Currents:¹

Culture is not a single point of view, with a uniform set of beliefs. Culture is more like an archeological dig, consisting of many layers, strata, or levels, each with a different worldview, bottom-line, perceptions of right and wrong, belief systems, and understanding of the world. These “beliefs” or “Value System” are also “MEMES or ValueMEME (pronounced vee-meem). The word “meme” was coined by English biologist Richard Dawkins in his 1976 book, *The Selfish Gene*, to represent a unit of cultural information that impacts human development. In the same manner that genes shape our biological makeup, memes give form to our cultural and social formation. Both carry coded information that reproduce their instructions in the bodies and minds that serve as hosts. Genes are transmitted through chemical systems and biological tissue in human bodies; memes spread their messages like viruses, through word-of-mouth, printed and electronic media, and cyberspace—using the human mind as a host.

An analogy with computers may help explain the relationship between genes, memes, and value systems. Computers consist of three constituent parts: the hardware, the software, and the operating system. The “hardware”—the computer—is comparable to the genes, the biological code carriers in DNA, inherited from our parents. But the hardware by itself is not functional until the “software,” the programs, are installed. These are equivalent to the memes, the “cultural DNA”—the ideas, values, beliefs, and behaviours gained from parents, culture, religion, and society. What makes the programs run is the “operating system,” whether it is Windows^x or Mac OS. This is similar to “MEMES, the deep-level Value Systems, paradigms, worldviews, belief structures, levels of bio-psycho-social-spiritual existence that “run” the “software” or “mindware” from which surface memes emerge. These “MEMES result from our responses to Life Conditions. Periodically our computers have to undergo a systems “upgrade” as our needs change. In the same manner one experiences a “mental upgrade” when one moves from one “MEME level to another, as our Coping Systems adjust to new Problems of Existence.

Value Systems are like super-memes. Once a new Value System is awakened in culture or in the collective life of a group, it will spread its instructional codes and life priority messages throughout that culture's or group's surface-level of living. It impacts beliefs, economic, political, and spiritual arrangements, psychological and sociological theories of living, styles of worship, forms of musical expression, views of human nature, our future destiny, and ways of expressing one's humanity. It doesn't just impact *what* people think and believe; it also alters *the way* they think and set priorities. A shift in “MEMES is a shift in Value Systems and way of seeing the world. These decision-making beliefs or Value Systems shape surface-level thoughts, beliefs, and actions. They explain why things happen and to whom. They assign life's priorities. They determine who is and who is not a “true believer,” define group boundaries, shape racist or inclusive thinking and behaviour, and write the scripts for future scenarios (Rosado 1999b).

Ninety-five percent of all attempts at group reconciliation, conflict resolution, motivational training, workshops on leadership, diversity training, and seminars on spiritual growth focus on these surface differences rather than on the deep operating value/beliefs systems within. Values Systems are complex Coping Systems—decision-making motivators and ways of thinking—that emerge in response to Problems of Existence. There are 6 billion people in the world today, and though we all come from some 100,000 genes—ALL of us—we share only a few basic Value Systems. Eight have emerged thus far (see table), as a result of bio-psycho-social-spiritual research, which impact human behavior, shape culture, and give structure to belief systems (Graves 1974; Beck and Cowan 1996).

THE SPIRAL-LIKE STRATA OF HUMAN VALUE SYSTEM CULTURAL CODES

| MEMES | COLOR | THEME | FOCUS | THINKING | VALUE SYSTEMS—BOTTOM LINES | LIFESTYLE |
|---------|-----------|---------------|-------|---------------|---|---------------------|
| Level 8 | TURQUOISE | WholeView | "We" | Holistic | Harmony and Holism | Lives for Wisdom |
| Level 7 | YELLOW | FlexFlow | "Me" | Systemic | Natural Processes of Order & Change | Lives for Mutuality |
| Level 6 | GREEN | HumanBond | "We" | Humanistic | Equality and Human Social Bond | Lives for Harmony |
| Level 5 | ORANGE | StriveDrive | "Me" | Materialistic | Success and Material Gain | Lives for Gain |
| Level 4 | BLUE | TruthForce | "We" | Absolutistic | Authority, Stability, "One-Right-Way" | Lives for Later |
| Level 3 | RED | PowerGods | "Me" | Egocentric | Power, Glory, Exploitation, No Boundaries | Lives for Now |
| Level 2 | PURPLE | KinSpirits | "We" | Animistic | Myths, Ancestors, Traditions, Our People | Lives for Group |
| Level 1 | BEIGE | SurvivalSense | "Me" | Automatic | Staying Alive, Reactive, Basic Survival | Lives for Survival |

A color scheme best identifies in a simple way the outward and inward transformations taking place as individuals and groups mature from birth to adulthood. The significance of the colors is only to identify the respective systems and has no symbolism beyond that. Notice how the Focus alternates between dominance of ME-oriented *Express-the-self* (warm colors) and WE-oriented *Sacrifice-the-self* (cool colors) life focus. Note also the differences in what is valued in each system as they flow from survival (Beige), to safety and security (Purple), to raw power and instant gratification (Red), to purpose in life (Blue), to strategies for success (Orange), to community awareness (Green), to alternative forms (Yellow), to global village (Turquoise). At each level there is a different Lifestyle, from living for survival to living for wisdom. The levels are open-ended, there is no final stage of development, as the ideal that God sets before us is "higher than the highest human thought can reach" (White 1952:18). The lower levels, however, have no understanding of what the higher levels consider to be of importance. The higher levels, on the other hand, often lose contact with the operating principles that make sense to the lower levels.

Here's the essence of the idea. Not only different nations, societies, cultures, and subcultures, but also different groups and entities within an organization as well as individuals are at different levels of psycho-social-spiritual emergence as displayed within these evolving levels of complexity. What moves one from one level to the next is a change in one's Life Conditions (as these are impacted by Time, Place, Problems, and Circumstances), coupled with an awakening of our Mental Capacities (our neurological system in the brain) that respond to these changes. Life conditions *outside* interact with latent thinking capacities *inside* the mind to awaken the next MEME level. It is an ever increasing and widening spiral of development as people move through the various levels of bio-psycho-social-spiritual complexity. Every time people move from one level to the next, they undergo a major paradigm shift, a different window through which to look out on the world, a transformation of their basic value system. This is a key aspect of what makes each level different, for the complexity of the thinking must match or exceed the complexity of the problems of existence. Yet, and here is a critical concept, the previously awakened levels do not disappear. Rather, they stay active within the value system stacks, thus impacting the nature and content of the more complex systems. A person can be at more than one memetic level in different areas of their life, even though one value system dominates their outlook. Thus, while their overarching MEME may be a conservative Blue, especially in terms of religion and the church, in relation to their family they may be Purple (tradition-driven), at work they may be Orange (success-driven), in sports they may be Red (power-driven), and in relation to others they may be Green (people-driven), but their basic paradigm and way of seeing the world is still Blue (order-driven).

These eight MEME codes or value systems serve as cultural magnets around which our "stuff" clusters and our life is aligned. When something is not right at the surface level—the level where we express ourselves in relation to others including God—or when our priorities are distorted or our lives are out of balance, we need to carefully examine what is happening below the surface in these deep psycho-social-spiritual currents. These determine *how* people think and respond to the world around them and not just *what* they say or do. Strain between these systems is the home of all human conflict, understanding, and *mis*-understanding. These MEMES are the sum total of the invisible, cultural, and spiritual forces that drive our perceptions, influence all of life's choices, lifestyles, and sense of what is right, wrong, and appropriate.

What cause a memetic shift in one's life is when old explanations and experiences no longer adequately explain one's emerging reality as a result of changes in one's Life Conditions (determined by time, place, problems, and circumstances), which now exceed the parameters of one's present worldview. These levels are "systems-in" people, not permanent "personality types." And like Russian Matroshka Dolls that also are "systems within," when one's cup overflows one then moves to the larger, more encompassing system. Previous value systems, however, do not go away; they just shift down the spiral. And, if changing Life Conditions warrant, we may return to these previous systems. When disaster strikes, for example, we are immediately reduced to Beige. It is this interaction between our "real life" experiences and our mind/brain capacities that causes these value systems to awaken, ebb, and flow. Without our latent mental capacities, the *world outside* has nothing to trigger (the situation of the

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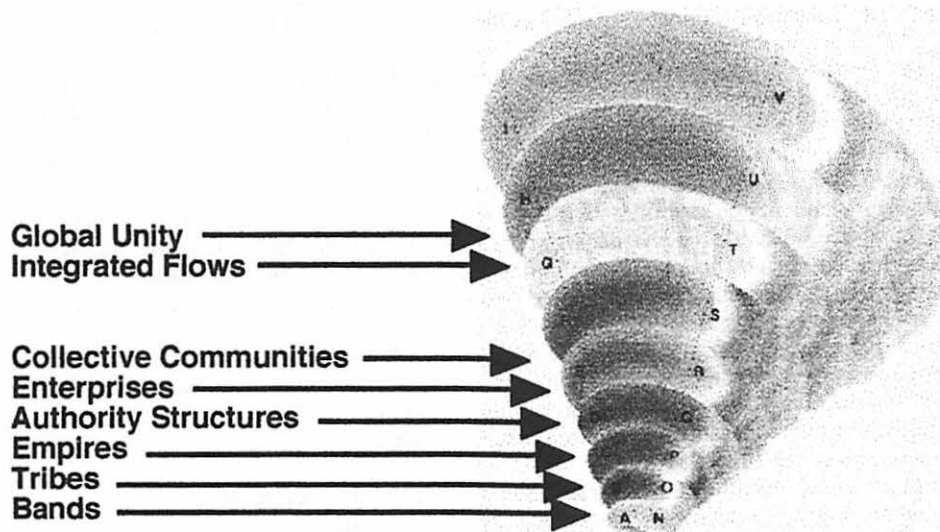
mentally impaired such as those suffering from Alzheimer's disease). Without the stimuli from outside, *systems within* may not have cause to be awakened (the case of the Amish and persons living in "closed" communities). Thus, *both* nature and nurture are important.

How Do MEME Levels Relate?

Persons or groups who exist or existed at any given level are not "better people"; they are simply different, operating with a different system of thinking. No MEME is inherently better or worse than another, as each has its positive and negative attributes. All have a purpose, depending on the operative Life Conditions and problems of existence people, groups, or cultures are experiencing. Appropriateness to the milieu is the key. The question to ask is, "Does the thinking fit the realities." Thus, to address issues of environmental responsibility for a planet undergoing global warming (Green & Yellow MEMES) to a culture or society experiencing tribal/ethnic group conflict (Purple and Red modes of thinking and living), is to impose a way of thinking and deep-level values for which there is no comprehension much less the mental capability of appreciating and valuing such issues. As Henri L. Bergson said: "The eye sees only what the mind is prepared to comprehend." It is not that people at the lower levels do not have the intelligence to deal with such issues. It is only that the circumstances have not awakened the next levels of thinking. All the Value Systems are within us; they only await the right Life Conditions to awaken them.

The point here is what is "appropriate" given the level of complexity of life experienced at that level of existence? The level of thinking must match the level of complexity. Picture, if you will, an ascending colorful spiral that swirls up from Beige Bands and Purple Tribes, and with each level widens its arcs while including the previous level as it rises to Green Collective Communities, Yellow Integrated Systems and beyond. The ninth level, Coral, resides in the dim unknown. The higher one moves up the spiral, or the strata of our cultural dig, the more complex are the Life Conditions. Such is the flow of The Spiral of Human Development (see graphic).

THE SPIRAL OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT



But does this mean that all levels are ultimately the same, that all Value Systems are equal to the overall good of humankind? Clare W. Graves, the pioneer of the Theory of Levels of Existence, answers this question best. "I am not saying in this conception of adult behavior that one style of being, one form of human existence is inevitable and in all circumstances superior to or better than another form of human existence another style of being. What I am saying is that when one form of being is more congruent with the realities of existence, then it is the better form of living for those realities. And what I am saying is that when one form of existence ceases to be functional for the realities of existence, then some other form, either higher or lower in the hierarchy, is the better style of living. I do suggest, however, and this I deeply believe is so, that for the overall welfare of total man's existence in this world, over the long run of time, higher levels are better than lower levels and that the prime good of any society's governing figures should be to promote human movement up the levels of human existence" (Beck and Cowan 1996:294).

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This concept of “stages” or “levels of development,” however, does not always rest easy with people. This is because as Clare Graves explains, people do not see their striving in life “as merely a stage they are going through, but as the ultimate, the permanent goal of all life.” Once people feel they have attained this “ultimate,” this “permanent goal” or understanding “of life”—and their Life Conditions are relatively stable—they tend to believe they have “arrived” at the “truth” and become satisfied and complacent with the extent of their knowledge. Result? They become conservative and cease to grow. Conservatism in matters of religion, for example, is a *sign of spiritual stagnation and decline*, and develops *when people stop investigating truth* due to their contentment with what they already have received (White 1948: 706-707).

Graves explained what lies behind such thinking. “The real finding is that no one understands anything above their own level. Even if you like what you hear of a level higher than you own, you will reinterpret it on the basis of your own level. Thus, a human being apparently can experience only up-to those systems that have become operational in his/her life. What individuals tend to do is to listen to what others at a later system are saying and when they run the content of what they heard through their top-down processing, it simply comes out, if at all, at the system they are currently at. No matter what we hear from others we will run the information through our brains and that information will generally come out as our system of thinking understands it” (Lee 1998).

The two value systems that tend to have the most difficulty grasping this discussion of “levels” and “stages of human development” are persons operating with either a strong Blue (Authoritarian) or a Green (Egalitarian) system of thinking. While the first reflects rigidity from the right, the other is a rigidity from the left. Blue thinking believes there is no “truth” beyond their level of understanding. Green, on the other hand, often operates with naïve relativism and a flatlander perspective, where all cultures and value systems are regarded as equal, and eschews all forms of hierarchical thinking. “The green meme,” declares Ken Wilber (2000:230-232), “effectively challenging the absolutisms of blue and orange,” mistakes “all universals and all holarchies as being of the same order,” and gets “locked” in a closed system of thinking. Yet, while we must respect and value the various cultures and a people’s respective system of values (Green thinking), not all values are the same nor are they of equal worth to what is good and functional for humankind (Yellow thinking). Thus, while Spiral Dynamics enables us to understand where Hitler’s values came from and why the German people followed him, it does not mean that these values are acceptable to the overall good of human existence. The Third Reich’s culture-specific “absolutes” must not be confused nor equated with “universals,” normally regarded as “human rights,” which transcend cultures (Rosado 1990).

Does this mean that everything is relative? Absolutely not. Cultural relativism does not imply that there is no system of moral values to guide human conduct. Rather, it suggests that every society has its own moral code to guide members of that society, but that these values are of worth to those who live by them, though they may differ from our own (Herskovits 1973:31; Rosado 1990). At each level people have “absolutes” and experience truth. But what may be an absolute at one level may not be the same at another level. This does not mean that there are multiple “truths,” but that the truth held may be seen from various perspectives as it unfolds. Thus, for Orthodox Jews and Seventh-day Adventists the Sabbath is the *seventh day* of the week, not the first or the sixth day. But how the Sabbath is viewed, its importance, and how it is presented to others, differs from level to level. Each level brings out a different aspect of the Sabbath truth. Thus the emphasis given to the Sabbath is pluralistic, reflective of the Value Systems at each level or stage of existence (Rosado 1999a:6, 2000).

Having said all this, it is important to recognize that a strong, healthy Blue *MEME* is *foundational* to the entire spiral. It provides the anchors of law, order, good authority, responsibility, and righteousness without which individuals, organizations, or nations stand weak. If we lose this crucial system, we lose direction, our moral compass, the inner core, and the essential foundation of the more complex systems.

Five qualities characterize the Spiral Levels:

1. They are *hierarchical*—each builds on and integrates the operations of the previous level.
2. They are *sequential*—one comes after the other in logically necessary fashion.
3. The sequence is *invariant*—you can’t skip over a level. The lessons of the previous level are essential for success in the next level.
4. The sequence is *universal*—though the rate of movement is different from culture to culture, the same series of levels characterizes the path of human development for all groups (Fowler 1981)
5. The process is *open-ended*—there is no finish, no final state of development; it is on-going (Graves 1974).

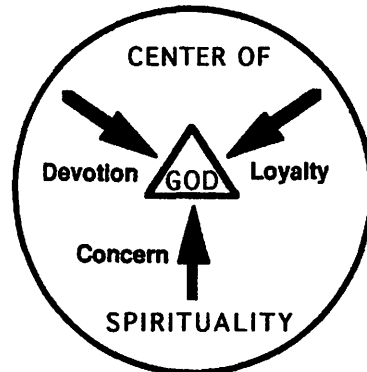
Toward a Definition of Spirituality:

How does all this relate to spirituality? For years now I have been teaching young people in various academic settings. Many of my students have a profound interest in spirituality. But what is spirituality? In my classes, especially my sociology of religion course, I have had to define spirituality in such a way that it encompasses the needs of all groups and extremes, from born-again Christians to witches to those Earth-First environmentalists enthralled by New Age forms of spiritual thinking, to atheists and agnostics—all in the same university class. The outcome was that all the students, no matter their particular spiritual belief system, concurred

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with the definition as one that resonated with their needs. Let me put forth two working definitions of spirituality developed after years of seeking to communicate this elusive concept to different audiences with varied but often vague understandings of the term.

Spirituality is a state of interconnectedness, an intangible reality and animating, integrating life-force that cannot be comprehended by human reason alone but is nonetheless as important as reason, intellect, and emotion in accounting for human behavior. It is the center of our devotion, loyalty and concern, the worship of which constitutes our god—whether that god be our self, sex, race or ethnic group, church, money, ideological beliefs, another person, nature, Allah, Buddha, the Great Spirit or Jesus Christ. It is the object of our ultimate love, human drive, commitment, source of power, and our interconnectedness with the Other—the divine, the self, the human, the natural, or any combination thereof—resulting in a state of security with a sense of worthwhile purpose.



In this definition of spirituality, God is spelled with a small letter “g” because the god at the center of most people’s lives, even among many professed Christians, is not the biblical God, but a human construction—an idol. An idol is any product of human construction, whether material or non-material, to which people give their ultimate devotion, loyalty and concern, and around which they organize their lives.

Within this understanding of spirituality there are no atheists, for we are all “spiritual beings.” We all have a spiritual center at the core of which is our “god,” whatever our understanding of that god may be or however we may have socially constructed it. Whatever a person gives their ultimate love, devotion, and commitment to, and to the extent that this thing or object or idea or person becomes the most important entity in a person’s life, that thing becomes one’s god. Thus, there is no such thing as an atheist or agnostic, for we all believe in something that transcends who we are and is greater than us, even if it is our own sense of reified self. Whatever is at the center of our life, at the core of our spiritual center, that thing IS our god. The crucial question then is: who or what is at the center of our life, our object of worship (Gilkey 1966:233).

Yet, whatever we consider to be our god can only ultimately serve as god if it is not transitory or temporal or depends on our whims or social circumstances, here today and gone tomorrow. Only that which transcends human existence and is eternal, only that which is not subject to time or temperament, in other words, cannot be taken from us, can serve as God. Only that which goes beyond our own welfare and is a source of security and meaning in our lives, and transcends our human existence, can serve as God.

This does not mean that people cannot make gods out of all kinds of things, which they do. It simply means that since these things are so temporary and transitory, most of what passes for god on this earth, leaves people in a state of insecurity and meaninglessness. Here lies the thirst for spiritual fulfillment and a meaningful purpose to life.

Since the above definition is rather complex, let me give a simpler version of it. *Spirituality is a state of interconnectedness with the Other—the divine, the self, the human, the natural or any combination thereof—resulting in a state of security with a sense of worthwhile purpose.* This is Holistic Spirituality, spirituality in four dimensions (see graphic), where the human center—our social self—is interconnected with: a *vertical* to God, the world of the sacred (pictured as an “eternal flame” within an equilateral triangle symbolic of the Trinity); an *inward* to self, the world of personal well-being; a *horizontal* to humankind, the world of people; and a *downward* to nature, the world of all non-human life-forms.



Most Christians tend to have only a one-dimensional form of spirituality, the vertical, manifested in a personal devotion to God divorced from concern for humankind, usually within a patriarchal paradigm. This was the type of spirituality that led to the rise of Monasticism early in Catholicism and later to Pietism in Protestantism, and eventually to the current rejection of Christianity by secular humanism. This one-dimensional kind of Christianity has resulted in a personal righteousness caught up with an overriding focus on the self in relation to God, at the expense of love to our brother, resulting in racism, and to our sister, resulting in sexism. It has also given rise to an attitude of indifference toward the environmental mess we have made in our planet, our ecological habitat, that declares: "Why bother, God is going to clean it up anyway?"

Another variant of a one-dimensional spirituality is a lack of a healthy connectedness to our personal self. Many people have fragmented selves, which can be expressed in one of two directions, in a sense of self-hatred, personal abuse, and low self-esteem, or in a narcissistic sense of superiority. These feelings that emerge from a fragmented self are often times taken out on others through acts of violence, abuse, dehumanization, discrimination and indifference. Or we can take them out on ourselves in feelings of self-rejection, inferiority, and in acts of abuse toward our self, or in a narcissistic self-love, focused on the body-beautiful, and a preoccupation with ourselves at the expense of others. It was with these concerns in mind that Jesus declared: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Only when I have a healthy love toward myself will I have a healthy love toward my neighbor—the Other in my sphere of influence. If I only have hate for myself, then this self-hate will be expressed in my relationship to others. Therein lies the source of a dimension of racism, sexism, and homophobia. Thus, one dimension of spirituality is a healthy inner connectedness with our social self.

Other forms of one-dimensional spirituality have been humanistic approaches focused only on the horizontal realm. Pulling strongly from popular, self-help forms of psychology, there is a growing spiritual movement seeking to get human beings in touch with their feelings, their emotions and connections to each other through eastern philosophy, meditation techniques and personality development theory. This "New Agey," quick fix, trendy, fast-food form of spirituality is invading corporate structures, university campuses, and suburban communities of America, as people seek to get more in tuned with their so-called "true inner selves."

At the other extreme of one-dimensional forms of spirituality are the types that focus on the female/feminine forms of the sacred, connecting people with nature, their ecological selves, and the rhythms and cycles of the universe. This is the primary locus of New Age forms of spirituality, some of which pull from American Indian expressions of spirituality, much to the abhorrence of American Indians (Deloria, Jr. 1992:43), in a downward and inward direction, seeking to get people in tune to themselves and to Gaia, the living Earth, personified as Earth Goddess or Mother Nature. Many of these spiritual forms eliminate the need for the vertical dimension to God, since god is believed to be within and not without, in the sense that we are all gods. All one has to do is to discover the god within and in nature. Neo-Pagan groups, Wicca, and Goddess spirituality are examples of this one-dimensional form of spirituality.

The Social Gospel Movement in Christianity around the turn of the century and Liberation Theologies since the 1960s have emphasized a two-dimensional form of spirituality—the vertical to God and the horizontal to humankind. The result has been much political involvement focused on social change and socioeconomic justice. Yet a missing element in both approaches has been a concern for our ecological/environmental home. To counter this missing dimension other forms of two-dimensional spirituality have emerged such as Zen Buddhism and Deep Ecology, focused on the horizontal and the downward, by integrating and interconnecting the inner self with the

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life-forces of nature through enlightenment. A sense of balance in life is sought through a focus on the present, centered on personal experience and meditation in connection with nature.

All of these forms of spirituality, however, from Christian to body-beautiful to New Age, are one or at best two-dimensional constructs of spirituality. These are forms of spirituality that are individual-centered, in search of community. People today are seeking “community” and searching for attachments. Wade Clark Roof (1993:252), drawing from M. Scott Peck, defines community as a sense of well-being arising out of social/communal bonds where people “share their lives and communicate honestly with one another,” within “relationships that go deeper than the masks of composure, and who have developed some significant commitment to ‘rejoice together, mourn together, and to delight in each other,’” in an environment that fosters the qualities of “sharing, caring, acceptance, belonging” and compassion. “The qualities themselves often are more important than the places where they are found.” This is why when people’s spiritual needs are not met by a specific religious group, they will go elsewhere. Religious brand-name loyalty is out; individual spiritual needs are in. If people have options or religious choices, given a chance, they will exercise those options. Since religion is a voluntary association, people exercise those options every weekend. If they feel they don’t have the option, because of religious monopoly or structural rigidity, and their needs are not being met, they will drop out for a lack of community. This is because genuine spirituality is *communal*, and its essence is *interconnectedness*. Spirituality thus finds its truest expression in the context of community. This is the main point of Emile Durkheim’s famous study on religion, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, where religion is seen as the “social glue” that binds the individual to the group, the moral community (1965).

The Spiral of Spirituality:

Why do we see such interest in spiritual phenomenon in an ever-increasing scientific age? Genetics and evolutionary theory don’t help much here. Let me suggest an answer from a Gravesian perspective, using SD theory. There are several reasons, let me offer three:

One is “millennial mania.” Millennial periods bring out millennial movements that focus on spirituality, the supernatural, and the end of the age. It happened at the turn of the year 1000 (Cohn 1990). Expect to see in the years ahead an increase in alternative religions and in spirituality. In fact, spirituality already is one of the hottest commodities and topics in the media.

A second reason is the bankruptcy of science to answer the big questions of life: Who we are? Why we are here? Where we are going? Science cannot answer the why questions of life in terms of ultimate meaning, only in terms of causality, and not always. In the face of these ultimate questions we all spiritually poor. People are searching for meaning to their fragile lives, since pure science alone no longer has the answers to a full understanding of human existence. Then too, most people don’t live their lives in “pure science” all the time, not even the most scientific one among us. We are not always rational in our ideas, attitudes, and actions. The “faith factor” is always present in much of what we do, whether we like to admit it or not, especially those of us who like to pass ourselves as always being objective.

A third reason is a Spiral Dynamics one, which I call, the “Madonna Shift”—from “material girl” (Orange) to “spiritual girl” (Green). The current shifts back to rural life, and a simpler lifestyle are all examples of this shift. It is no longer “he who dies with all the toys wins,” a very Orange meme. Rather it is one reflected in Stephen Covey’s soul-searching maxim, “No one in their deathbed ever wished they had spent more time at the office” (Covey 1994). Thus after all the toys, stocks, and image enhancement additions, what’s left? There has to be more to fill the emptiness inside. The result is a return to either Blue religion or Green spirituality. In an unstable age of rapid social change at the speed of nanoseconds, people are desperately searching for anchors to the soul. Many are now seeking and finding it in spirituality. While concern for spirituality has been the realm of religion, much of religion is losing its focus, and a whole generation disappointed with the trivia of organized religion, is now looking for spirituality elsewhere. Thus, secularism, contrary to what was once believed, does not lead to the demise of religion, but to its transformation through revival and spiritual innovation (Stark and Bainbridge 1982).

Religion versus Spirituality:

“If spirituality is the journey, then a religious tradition functions as a map of the territory.” This statement by John Testerman (1997:288) provides a good analogy that clarifies well the difference between spirituality and religion. Testerman goes on to bring out useful insights from this analogy, by suggesting that sometimes “mapmaking” can consume a person’s time such that it can “take the place of going on the journey.” This is so true, as often good religious folk focus their whole attention on the rules of the road, but never travel the road the map of which they know well. The result is a religious form without a spiritual experience.

For others it is possible to launch out on their spiritual journey without a map to chart their journey. But then, as Testerman says, they “risk getting lost.” This is the route many today are taking in view of their dismissal of organized religion. Since many such folk find the map questionable or prefer their own concocted map, they launch out on their faith journey without chart or compass, letting the winds of the “spirit” serve as a travel guide. This is why many people end up going on short journeys. Thus, the dilemma of the spiritual dimension for many

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today is that spirituality can exist without a religious institutional home, while for others religion can exist without spirituality. Either form can ultimately be unfulfilling since both religion and spirituality are not only personal journeys but also social experiences within a supportive community. Yet, as Dale Matthews suggests, “spirituality poses questions; religion composes answers” (Matthews 1998:182). In light of this discussion, I define religion and spirituality as follows.

Definitions:

Religion: The organized express of faith and the sacred. Is communal, particular, defined by boundaries.
Spirituality: A state of interconnectedness with the Other. Is private, universal, no boundaries.

The following spiral of value systems reflects how religion and spirituality are different at each memetic level.

Value Systems:

- Purple:** **RELIGION** is the mainspring of life that holds the clan-tribe-family together, and gives meaning and purpose to life within the context of the group. **SPIRITUALITY** is an awareness that both nature and everyday life are influenced by the world of spirits, both good and evil, and needs to be placated through spirit guides—shamans, mediums, witch-doctors, gods & goddesses, holy men, elders, religious leaders; amulets, totems, signs, and relics of the magic.²
- Red:** **RELIGION** at this level views God as an all-powerful, vengeful, controlling ruler, with human passions and weaknesses, who can be bought off. (“God, if get me out of this mess, I’ll...”) **SPIRITUALITY** is a whimsical “bolt from the blue,” and often takes on the form of idolatry, as individuals seek god-like status and deny their mortality.
- Blue:** **RELIGION** is organized, institutional, hierarchical in structure, purposive, and rule-bound. Rigidity, guilt, and dogmatism are high. **SPIRITUALITY** is self-sacrificing in nature, and is defined as specific beliefs and truths, a code of conduct, and as a contest between the forces of good and evil, which will be settled in the end time. The script is “written” and pre-determined; you simply follow it.
- Orange:** **RELIGION** is independent, entrepreneurial, strategic, and success-oriented. **SPIRITUALITY** is “feels-good,” “tell me more about me,” gushy, emotional, experiential, and multiplistic—many possible ways but one is best. God can be persuaded, and wants you to succeed in the here and now, and not wait for the there-and-then.
- Green:** **RELIGION** is self-help, egalitarian, communitarian, consensual, and relativistic, but intolerant. Rigidity is high, dogmatism is low. Don’t know what they believe, but they are certain about it. **SPIRITUALITY** is inner-oriented, mystical, focused on internal peace, harmony, and togetherness, and on connectedness to “natural forces”. Seeks understanding and integration of the mind, soul, and consciousness. God is within. Is harmonic with PURPLE.
- Yellow:** **RELIGION** is integrative, flexible, inclusive, tolerant, functional, and contextual, with a flattened organizational pyramid. **SPIRITUALITY** is inner-directed, low on dogma, synergetic, but high on expressiveness, without being sacrificial.
- Turquoise:** **RELIGION** is a living, order-seeking system of inter-linked causes and effects, that transcends the usual human barriers, to create global community in harmony with all forms of life (not just human) in a single ecosystem. **SPIRITUALITY** is holistic in nature, encompassing four dimensions: the vertical to God, the inward to self, the horizontal to humankind, the outward to nature. It stands in awe of the cosmic order, with a macro view of how all of life (human and non-human) interconnects with the divine with a sense of order and purpose.

Three Streams of Spirituality:

Three streams of thought with regard to spirituality are currently flowing. The first and most powerful stream flows from traditional BLUE world-religions, primarily Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism, and emerges from and is focused on their “holy books.” The second and far-side stream, often at odds with the first, is the GREEN New Age stream of spirituality that is increasing in size. But Don Beck says, “Green is not New Age, but New Age finds a niche in Green.” Most true. This stream is very inwardly focused and me-centered, and is oriented toward spiritualism and the immortality of the soul.

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The third stream lies between these two, and though right now it is a mere trickle, and most people have probably never heard of it, it will soon become a rushing force that will draw from the best elements of the other two streams to become an increasingly powerful stream of spiritual thought in this 21st century. This is the TURQUOISE stream emerging from Quantum Physics. Exploration of astronomy (not astrology which is in tune with New Age and is PURPLE), and the origins of the universe, is giving scientists a new understanding of the “physics” of God and of spirituality. This stream, as Tipler (1994) brings out, is compatible with the best of Christianity and the deeper-level spiritual teachings of Jesus and the other great world religion founders.

Spirituality and Compassion:

There is a profound relationship between spirituality and compassion, for wherever genuine spirituality is manifested the other is also present. Matthew Fox (1979) has addressed this connection in a most inspirational and challenging manner. Compassion is a heavenly plant transplanted to earth, and wherever it is manifested, God is there. “Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God” (3 John 11). Compassion is a rare commodity in the world today, especially the business and political world. To be successful in the interconnected world of interdependence and interhuman relations of the 21st century, compassion needs to be a necessary individual and institutional character quality.

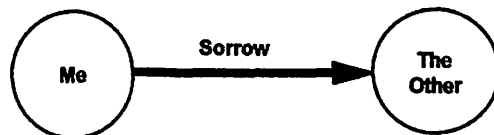
Compassion is not the same as sympathy. There is a vast difference. Sympathy (meaning to sorrow with) is an emotional response of sorrow toward another being generated by pity. Whereas compassion (meaning to suffer with) is the ability to suffer with another being—including non-humans—with loving, caring concern, in an endeavor to alleviate suffering and remove the pain.

Three couplets illustrate the difference between the two.

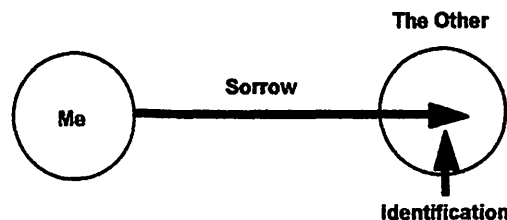
1. Sympathy *looks down* with teary-eyed pity and says, “Oh, I am so sorry.” Compassion *comes down* with loving concern and declares, “How can I be of help?”
2. Sympathy remains in the realm of *affection*. Compassion always moves from affection to *action*.
3. Sympathy is some times motivated out of *self-interest* in a pious cloak. Compassion is motivated out of a *genuine concern* for others with no strings attached. The essence of Compassion is *taking the role of the other* and viewing life from the Other’s perspective, out of the Other’s situation of need, as a motivation for action.

How do compassion and sympathy differ from empathy? These three concepts tend to be confused in the minds of many as similar or even the same, but they are not. They are vastly different and elicit from the respondent three different types of behaviors. These three behaviors can best be illustrated in the following manner.

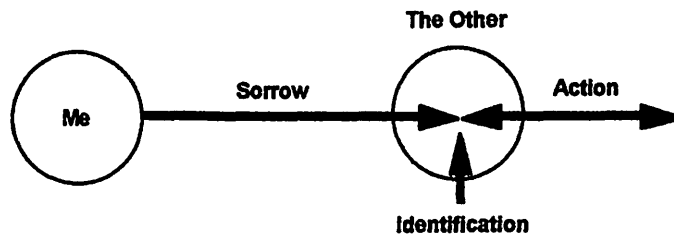
1. In Sympathy there is *sorrow* for the Other in need. But with sorrow there is also a sense of distance, separation from the Other, an “I’m-not-like-you” type of response. Even though there is an emotional response, the “bridge of identification” with the Other has not been crossed.



2. In Empathy there is not only sorrow, but also *identification* with the Other in need. Here the person crosses the “bridge of identification” and enters into the emotional sphere of the Other and identifies with the pain. The Other senses and knows that identification has taken place.



3. In Compassion there is not only sorrow and identification with the Other in need, but also an involvement in *action* to meet the need.



Here the response does not stop at identification, but goes one step further to take the necessary steps of action to alleviate suffering. The two-way arrow symbolizes that the action takes into consideration the wishes and, if possible, the involvement of the Other in a reciprocal process of bringing about change through empowerment. Much of what passes for compassion is often an imposition from the outside, without regard for what might be best for the Other nor for their input.

There is nothing wrong with sympathy, *per se*, however. There are many times when the only action a person can take is limited at a sympathetic response. There are other times when one can go further and express empathy. And there will be times when the opportunity will be there to express compassion. The problem comes when one has the ability to demonstrate compassion, but for reasons of one's own choosing, decides to limit the action only to sympathy or at best empathy. This is what the story of the Good Samaritan is all about (Luke 10)—to see oneself in the experience of the Other and move into action to change the circumstances, and not just limit one's efforts to a mere sympathetic or empathetic response. Compassion, thus, is an *attitude*, a way of life, which arises out of *spirituality*—that sense of interconnectedness—and manifests itself in *action*.

But neither is compassion the same as altruism. Altruism is a helping behavior that may or may not arise out of compassion. Whereas compassion is always altruistic, altruism may or may not be compassionate, in the sense that it can on occasions just be a spontaneous reaction with no sense of interconnectedness to the Other, other than being someone in need. Altruism is both innate and learned; compassion is not innate, it is learned. At the heart of compassion lies "respect"—the process whereby the Other is treated with deference, courtesy, and compassion in an endeavor to safeguard the integrity, dignity, value, and social worth of the individual. *It means treating people the way they want to be treated.* As Nicholas Berdyaev declares: "To eat bread is a material act, to break and share it a spiritual one." This is the mark of true spirituality—compassion.

Thus, what is needed is a four-dimensional, holistic spirituality that connects us to God, to our self, to humankind and to our ecological world, thereby creating community—compassionate and caring. This is a spirituality that serves as an integrating life-force that dissolves all three forms of alienation—religious, human, and ecological—and fuses all three worlds or dimensions with meaning, purpose, and unity in diversity in community. It is a spirituality centered on God—the Great Spirit—that balances our relationship and responsibility to our fellow human beings, to our environmental home, and to our self with a meaningful, purposive existence in community.

People today are searching for meaning to all the chaos in society and in their lives. This is the driving force behind the quest for spirituality, a need for a caring, compassionate community, a desire for *a sense of meaning* to life—the *why* behind the *what*—a sense of worthwhile purpose. Langdon Gilkey (1966) tells us that: "Meaning in life is the spiritual fuel that drives the human machine. Without it we are indifferent and bored; there is no ambition to work, we are inspired by no concern or sense of significance, and our powers are unstirred and so lie idle. Without 'meaning' we are undirected and a vulnerable prey to all manner of despair and anxiety, unable to stand firm against any new winds of adversity." A recovery of holistic spirituality in its four dimensions changes all this.

Genuine or holistic spirituality, security, and meaning to life is found when our lives are centered in that *which cannot be taken away from us*. Why? Because only that which cannot be taken away from us is able to give us a sense of genuine security, and is the only thing that can qualify as GOD in our center of spirituality. Everything else dissolves under pressure or changes with time.

The Source of Genuine Spirituality:

In an unstable age of rapid socio-political change, people are desperately searching for an anchor to the soul. Many are now seeking for it in spirituality. But this area can be just as bankrupt as science, if people place at the center of their life that which is not eternal and divine, but temporary and transitory lacking community. Failure to center life on the sacred has resulted in the various forms of alienation throughout history—religious, human, ecological, and now spiritual.

Today, American society is becoming more and more awashed in spirituality. It seems like everything is taking on a sense of spirituality, from aerobics, to the environmental movement, to vegetarianism. But it is also a

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spirituality that flees from *grace*, the Christian belief that human salvation is all of God divorced of human effort. Grace, the source of genuine spirituality, makes all our efforts to make ourselves divine beings irrelevant because it proclaims us already accepted and “legitimated by the work of Someone Else, without a single effort on our part” (Capon 1996). Today’s pop-brand of spirituality is any form of the sacred that maintains connection with the divine firmly in the grasp of human control. People today “will buy any recipe for [spirituality] as long as that formula leaves the responsibility for cooking up [spirituality] firmly in human hands” (Capon 1996). The result is a shaping of God in various images of humankind. This is because people tend to develop or gravitate toward those forms of religious expression that are compatible with their cultural lifestyle and social behavior or which give meaning to their existence. In other words, instead of being created in the image of God, people create God in their own image. Langdon Gilkey (1966:234) gives us the core reason why God must be center of our spirituality.

The only hope in the human situation is that the “religiousness” of [human beings] find its true center in God, and not in the many idols that appear in the course of our experience. If [people] are to forget themselves enough to share with each other, to be honest under pressure, and to be rational and moral enough to establish community, they must have some center of loyalty and devotion, some source of security and meaning, beyond their own welfare.

This center of loyalty beyond themselves cannot be a human creation, greater than the individual but still finite, such as the family, the nation, tradition, race, or the church. Only the God who created all [peoples] and so represents none of them exclusively; only the God who rules all history and so is the instrument of no particular historical movement; only the God who judges His faithful as well as their enemies, and loves and cares for all, can be the creative center of human existence.

The ultimate concern of each [person] must raise [him or her] above [their] struggles with their neighbor instead of making these conflicts more bitter and intense. Given an ultimate security in God’s eternal love, and an ultimate meaning to [their] own small life in God’s eternal purposes, a [person] can forget [their] own welfare and for the first time look at [their] neighbor free from the gnawings of self-concern.

From this we can perhaps now see what the [person] of real faith is like. [He or she] is the [person] whose center of security and meaning lies not in [their] own life but in the power and love of God, a [person] who has surrendered an overriding concern for [themselves], so that the only really significant things in [their] life are the will of God and [their] neighbor’s welfare. Such faith is intimately related to love, for faith is an inward self-surrender, a loss of self-centeredness and concern which transforms a [person] and frees [them] to love.

Thus, a balanced approach suggests that genuine, holistic spirituality needs to be centered in God, the true object of our worship, who does not change but is the same yesterday, today and forever, thereby creating a sense of integrated balance between our self, the human, the natural and the spiritual worlds. This *Spirit*-uality then is none other than the *Divine Spirit*, who creates a longing and yearning for God in the human heart, along with a deep reverence and respect for—but not worship of—nature, our fellow human beings, and our self.

Saint Augustine (Early Church Father, 354-430), recognizing humankind’s need for spirituality, declared: “Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee.” Blaise Pascal (French mathematician, philosopher, physicist and father of statistics, 1623-1662), reminded us that, “There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each [person], which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God.” This is the essence and source of genuine, holistic spirituality, *interconnectedness with God*.

The challenge this poses for spiritual seekers is to develop a spiritual life built on holistic spirituality that creates community, rather than on traditional one-dimensional or at best two-dimensional models of spirituality arising out of individualism or self-centeredness. Only then will one’s table of life be balanced, resulting in a life of meaningful purpose and dedicated compassionate service to others. Only then will we take the first spiral steps that move us from Flatland toward creating a caring society.

¹ This discussion of Value Systems theory comes from the seminal research of Dr. Clare W. Graves (Union College, NY), "Human Nature Prepares for a Momentous Leap," *The Futurist*, April 1974, and from his students, Don E. Beck, Chris C. Cowan, *Spiral Dynamics: Mastering Values, Leadership and Change* (Blackwell, 1996), and an e-mail the author received from William Lee, another former student of Graves. Additional thoughts come from Beck's article, "Turbulence in the Balkans, a Paleo-Cultural View," e-mail to author April 20, 1999.

² An illustration of how the Purple value system functions in Filipino society is the paper by Reuel U. Almocera, "Scientific Mindset, Animistic Worldview, and the Gospel: Implications for Religious Education in the Asia-Pacific Region." A paper presented at the 26th Annual Faith and Learning Seminar on Science and Religion held at the Geoscience Research Institute, Loma Linda, CA, July 16-28, 2000.

³ Comments from a discussion between members of the International Paleopsychology Project headed by Howard Bloom.

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