

# Second Philosophy

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Title	How Valid is Spirituality
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## INTRODUCTION

The concept of Spirituality is widely used around the world, yet attempting to define it and assess its validity are extraordinarily difficult. This debate will seek to probe the concept to assess what it means and whether the claimed meanings for the experience are valid in terms of the definition of spirituality as a real feature of the world.

In other words is spirituality a genuine discrete phenomenon of human experience or can it be explained in other terms in the spheres of science and psychology? Does the concept of spirituality add anything new to our knowledge of the world. The defenders of the concept of course do think that we learn something new when we enter into this experience and that an explanation of the phenomena to others does add to our total knowledge of reality. A frequent common denominator of this claimed experience is that of increased awareness. Awareness of many things, including an awareness of a greater reality, a deeper inner reality, a sense of purpose or pattern to individual life and its connectedness to the universe, a heightened awareness of the interconnectedness of all things.

For some the essence of spirituality is a sense of the purposefulness or meaningfulness of the cosmos. For them spirituality is a way of discerning the meaningfulness and purposefulness of existence itself. This sense of awareness does open new epistemological doors. Spirituality is in this sense new knowledge. Opponents of the concept feel that what is being reported as Spirituality is just primitive human emotion.

What once was accounted for by religion is in spirituality the last dying twitches of religiosity in a secular scientific world. Science and rationality can account for all we know, there is no new door to knowledge via Spirituality indeed in its anti science New Age Manifestations Spirituality is an epistemological dead end likely to hinder the true understanding of reality.

## QUESTIONS:

What is your position on these issues?

1. Do you think that Spirituality can be defined? If so what is your definition.
2. Does Spirituality have any valid meaning, in particular does it give us a sense of meaningfulness and purposefulness to our existence, or is it merely a redescription of things we already know or can know from other sources eg science, and in particular psychology?
3. Is a focus on Spirituality a help or hindrance for humanity in general and western society in particular?

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## DISCUSSION:

**Renald:** Yes

**Dick:** is a thought real?

**Birric:** I want to state emphatically that the cosmos can be VERY meaningful without spirituality

**Oswy:** I should say I am fairly neutral on this I need to be convinced about spirituality? Over to you

**Wichard:** I agree with Birric

**Wichard:** Spirituality can be defined. Spirituality is a belief system that includes religions and a belief in some entity or entities considered to be higher powers, which control aspects of the natural world and other worlds within the system (like heaven, hell, nirvana, purgatory, paradise). The entities in the belief system are called spirits and their powers are spiritual or otherworldly, even though individual who use spirituality often engage in behaviours designed to cause the spirits to change aspects of their current natural world existence. Investment of self with the spirituality belief system usually seems to incorporate a position of the separateness of the mind for the corporeal body and the need to posit that humans have a spirit essence called a soul – positions that I reject personally. I see spirituality as a particular (peculiar?) way of knowing with rules and recognition procedures that lead to behaviours and explanations that are only consistent within the spiritual belief system.

**Oswy:** Wichard there is a lot to absorb there

**Reflection:** very nice introduction Oswy, thanks

**Renald:** Well, that's a definition, all right...

**Dar:** spirituality does not have to involve spirits; not an accurate one; but, talk about that if you like

**Oswy:** Richard a lot of people reject the idea that spirituality needs spirits

**Shingles:** Yes, but there are these reported instances of transcending the ordinary world, how do we account for these reports?

**Reaser:** I feel a sense of a path that I follow to me it is the silver thread , I feel that it is a thread throughout my life , what it is I do not know , but it is very special to me

**Dick:** is the Latin word meaning the wind

**Wichard:** Then provide their definition

**Reflection:** on one level it is akin to asking if placebos are valid, they certainly have profound effects in the world, and so on a pragmatic basis they are important aspects of reality, as is spirituality

**Renald:** Shingles, perhaps by recognizing the ordinary world is merely ordinary?

**Deoridhe:** Most people I've talked to about my experiences who want to dismiss them encourage me to check myself into a psychiatric hospital.

**Sean:** one wonders why some appear to fear any possibility of there being something to spirituality

**Shingles:** so why do people claim such things is what I'm driving at, Renald?

**Birric:** Well yes, people who reject spirits nevertheless believe that there are unseen supernatural powers and forces and force fields and such - none of which has ever been demonstrated - but debunked to the max

**Renald:** Shingles, I assume they claim such experiences because they have in fact had such experiences.

**Oswy:** I suppose most people see it as something within a sort of transcendent experience it need not involve other entities from a spirit world.

**Dick:** how does spirit differ from mind ?

**Reaser:** that I do not know

**Dick:** consciousness

**Oswy:** Dick you could argue they are one and there is nothing special about spirituality ie nothing unique about it

**Shingles:** that these experiences can inevitably be rationally and scientifically accounted for, without the presence of spirit in the universe, should we say, Renald?

**Reaser:** or maybe decision to follow a path

**Dick:** roughly Oswy

**Renald:** While there are people who put great emphasis on whole zoologies of spirit, for many it's more a matter of an attitude toward life/being than all that.

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**Paula:** perhaps without spirituality most humans would feel that their life has no meaning or purpose

**Wichard:** But isn't the decision to follow a path a conscious, cognitive one?

**Reflection:** Oswy, I like your introduction because you accurately note that spirituality refers to altered states of awareness, and has nothing to do, necessarily with non-scientific, non-secular, belief systems as such, so for example meditation is a form of spirituality, and is a perfectly valid experience, not rooted in any greater supernaturalist belief system

**Reaser:** I feel like a watcher of a cosmic TV show and at some critical Nexus I make a decision that affects me for ever if that makes sense

**Renald:** Shingles... accounting for something scientifically does nothing but that. My contention would be that if there is room in experience for more than science, of course science will account for it -- scientifically. And if one has no room in her life for more, then that's all there is.

**Oswy:** Reflection I was trying to put the view of those who feel there is this extra quantity to ourselves that we can tap into.

**Wichard:** Why would meditation need a "spiritual" explanation? It's cognitive and operates rationally

**Birric:** Well, to me, "spiritual love" seems mostly to be a ruse to avoid raw sex - because some people are terrified of it

**Issakar:** What of spirituality as a heightened aesthetic state of being, not so much concerned with the philosophical considerations of the external existence of the objects of spirituality-- or yes what Reflection is saying

**Oswy:** Perhaps I should say quality

**Paula:** bigger thing - smaller mind?

**Wichard:** A "heightened aesthetic state of being" does not require any reference to any form of spirituality

**Reaser:** sex to me is the physical expression of the spiritual and very special

**Renald:** Nothing REQUIRES much...

**Reaser:** but I am a romantic

**Oswy:** Wichard are you taking the strong rationalist line in this ie there is nothing to be accounted for by spirituality. ie its not really a real phenomena o to speak?

**Wichard:** Sex is about pheromones and glands and instinct

**Reflection:** Wichard, meditation is a spiritual experience, and does not require a spiritual explanation

**Birric:** What is a "heightened state of being" -- I always feel sooooo . . . left behind . . . and I have the nagging suspicion that that is exactly the point

**Paula:** Reaser: even a quickie in a bus shelter?

**Reaser:** well they may be involved but I like to think more as well

**Reaser:** yes brief encounters very special

**Oswy:** Birric, that's how I feel as if I missed something. I try to liken the feeling to listening to music or poetry but I can't convince myself its anything different to normal things

**Renald:** It isn't.

**Wichard:** For the individual vested in a "spiritual" mindset, the experience of "spirituality" is very real, but I find not other evidence than the personal and subjective for it

**Reaser:** now you all know my innermost secrets lol

**Shingles:** Look at this quote of William Jones 'All at once I ... felt the presence of God... I tell of the thing just as I was conscious of it - as if his goodness and his power were penetrating me altogether. The more I seek words to express this intimate intercourse, the more I feel the impossibility of describing the thing... God was present, though invisible; he fell under not one of my senses, yet my consciousness perceived him'. I think this is a good way to understand a spiritual experience, for those who understand themselves to have had one, Renald & all

**Dar:** if many people can have similar subjective experiences, what is wrong with that?

**Oswy:** Reaser the example you raised is a good one is sexual experience love transcendent or just a matter of glands etc.

**Renald:** To me, spiritual attitudes and practices are assertions, rehearsals, refinements of the order of the universe and one's place in it.

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**Dar:** isn't looking at, say, the moon only a sharing of many people's subjective experience?

**Issakar:** Heightened-- or altered state of being, charged with more spontaneity of a culmination of certain emotions-- may also (depending on the version of spirituality, I guess) necessitate the suspension of belief, or simply the acceptance of what might be considered obscure axioms

**Reflection:** well Oswy, I think that is a good analogy, "spiritual" experiences are in some sense artistic exercises, although they are usually taken literally by those who practice them

**Shak:** Just finished eating my stir fry. Very appetising! Not really spiritual, though.

**Wichard:** Nothing wrong with subjective experiences, just doesn't make them universal, interesting, useful or rational.

**Reaser:** I think it is very special to me

**Oswy:** Dar the worrying thing is that spirituality leads us down a dead end epistemological door it makes us believe there is something there worth noting.

**Shak:** My take would be: Yeah, but my meaning might be unconventional.

**Birric:** Well, Shingles, substitute these words, also often heard: "All at one I felt . . . being Napoleon (or Hitler or anybody else) . . . (and then the men with the butterfly nets appeared)"

**Shak:** Sorry, garbled. Yeah, I think there's a thing we could call spirituality. But my meaning might be unconventional.

**Reaser:** but spirituality has another dimension not merely sexual

**Dar:** well, I'll concede that odd experiences are hard to understand and easy to misinterpret

**Shingles:** And the experience is subjective, so the experiencer is privileged with that information another cannot experience, Oswy

**Renald:** Oswy, no... nothing about it MUST make one BELIEVE anything...

**Dar:** but, such experiences do indeed occur.

**Paula:** fear

**Wichard:** Generally I worry that "spiritual" beliefs have been embedded in hierarchical authoritarian patriarchal institutions and used to amass wealth (especially property) and control behaviours (moral and ethical systems attached to the spiritual beliefs). These belief systems are usually inculcated very early to maintain the domination of those vested in the powers of the spiritual beliefs (often old men controlling all younger individuals).

**Shak:** We all think we're free to make decisions about how we run our lives.

**Reaser:** the little mind killer

**Birric:** I don't think delusion is a "privilege"

**Oswy:** Renald, don't understand that?

**Issakar:** That doesn't make the experience of spirituality illegitimate Wichard.

**Birric:** I agree with Wichard and could not say it better

**Renald:** About the "epistemological dead-end" business, Oswy...

**Shak:** That's not a physical property. It must be spiritual, if it's non-physical.

**Shingles:** no, I mean they have experienced something that only they will see, they cant show another person it, which is the big problem, Birric

**Reflection:** well Wichard, the vast majority of people on the planet do define spiritual exercises as fundamental to their existence, and on that basis alone they must be considered very interesting and very important

**Wichard:** But it still remains in the individual realm

**Reaser:** well if it had not been for Van Gough's delusion we would not see his unique work

**Issakar:** What of collective spirituality?

**Reaser:** yet he did suffer

**Paula:** fear of death and fear of our lives being meaningless in the big scheme of things.....

**Sage:** Well put, Reflection.

**Wichard:** They may all be wrong Reflection

**Oswy:** But Renald don't people like Richard see it as a dead end or worse?

**Renald:** So may we all, Wichard.

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**Shingles:** but why are they so common, if they're all mistaken, Wichard?

**Sage:** Wichard, you can't be wrong about what you care about. That's a matter of experience, not of knowledge.

**Reaser:** I believe my life to be meaningful and that of all of you too, but I am not into formal religion

**Dar:** spiritual practice does not always involve the taking on of beliefs

**Renald:** Oswy, yes, many people see it that way. Many people over time have had all kinds of unfortunate notions about each other.

**Dar:** course, many do

**Reflection:** true about the hierarchical authoritarian patriarchal institutional aspect of spirituality, Wichard, but of course the same could be said of science;-) (or almost anything else that people do collectively)

**Issakar:** Spirituality need not be institutionalized. I don't think spirituality per se is the domain of religion, though it is a necessary part of it.

**Oswy:** Reaser this is a common report of spirituality ie it gives a patter a road as you said a meaning a pattern. Many would say it's a false pattern or road.

**Reaser:** I would argue with god himself that no one is beyond redemption and would refuse to go to heaven if it existed because it was too exclusive

**Issakar:** Could be said of science, could be say of any institutionalized, bureaucratized activity.

**Wichard:** Grosch points out that many of the "spiritual" exercises are presented by Philo of Alexandria: "research (zetesis), thorough investigation (skepsis), reading (anagnosis), listening (akroasis), attention (prosoche), self-mastery (enkrateia), and indifference to indifferent things...meditations (meletai), therapies of the passions, remembrance of good things....and the accomplishment of duties." (31)" – none of this looks spiritual to me, rather it's intellectual.

**Shingles:** I like that term 'hierarchical authoritarian patriarchal'

**Issakar:** Could be said of philosophical schools.

**Sage:** lol shingles

**Teleo:** Western religion is the curtailing of individual engagement with anything pointing or pertaining of the spiritual. It did not represent the creation of the spiritual in any way..imo

**Wichard:** Yes, human organizations present many problems

**Issakar:** Take the merchandising of Objectivism

**Wichard:** Or the merchandising of religion

**Shingles:** how might one account for an unexplained feeling of bliss during these reported experiences, Wichard?

**Issakar:** Nature of human organization

**Oswy:** All I think we are moving into question 2 but I am not sure I have been convinced by the definitions of spirituality yet.

**Dar:** yes, both Marxism and Objectivism seems to promote in its followers a strange spiritual or religious like zeal and devotion. I'm still mystified by that.

**Issakar:** Me neither Oswy, run through them

**Wichard:** That's an emotion, bliss, is, that Campbell says to follow

**Reaser:** you cannot define the Tao or it is not the Tao lol

**Renald:** Well, the original question was "How Valid is Spirituality?" And I guess my response could be summed up as "how valid is ANYTHING?" Most of the sub-question seemed to seek rather absolute, totalizing answers, and I don't see how that's necessary or useful.

**Shingles:** I see, ok, Wichard

**Shak:** I'll try again. Mind is spiritual, in so far as it has properties like will which are non-physical.

**Oswy:** I would like to concentrate on the idea of it as being something inner, a sort of extra dimension to ourselves and keep religion out o fit and spirits

**Wichard:** I see bliss as a very cognitive artefact with many hormonal aspects

**Issakar:** Is it necessarily a heightened aesthetic experience? What of people who consider it spiritual to simply give or follow religious law?

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**Reaser:** some things seem important to me and spirituality does

**Reflection:** Wichard, the defining element of "spiritual exercises" is not that they are not intellectual/cognitive on some level, but rather that they have a transformative emotional effect (usually for what the practitioner feels is for the better)

**Marya:** My definition of 'spiritual' is the word people give to positive feelings they are unable to articulate.

**Shingles:** I think the notion contains that, yes, Marya

**Renald:** Unable to articulate, Marya?

**Wichard:** It's sometimes called flow but Czchscentmihaly (sp?)

**Marya:** yes - by default it is referred to as spiritual

**Simulat:** Oswy - I suggest that spirituality underlies both religion and science - the spiritual stance is one of awe and reverence for the world we are in, and this is combined with a deep desire to understand what the world is really like

**Renald:** hmm

**Reaser:** it underlies our very existence in my opinion

**Teleo:** bout time Sim :)

**Wichard:** Along Marya's line: Spirituality could be defined as the emotion of joyous intellectualism that is at the heart of philosophical discussion. It then becomes akin to the bliss sought through the mind engaged in thought. The "Follow your bliss" statement belongs to Joseph Campbell (at least in my mind).

**Renald:** Wichard, that can be it, yes.

**Renald:** I don't think that exhausts it.

**Issakar:** Too intellectualist

**Oswy:** All So we have mind like aesthetic awe at eh world reverence positive emotion. Tht sounds good is it a group of special emotions then?

**Shingles:** and that awe of which Sim speaks need not be ascribed to any quality that exists outside the universe, dualistically, but awe inspired by that which is the universe already

**Dick:** Marya spiritual can be of the occult .. hel ... kaos ... sheol

**Wichard:** What do awe and reverence have anything to do with spirituality

Renald blinks

**Simulat:** yes shingles

**Reaser:** no it is all emotions hate and anger included

**Wichard:** The come for understanding and amazement

**Shingles:** I suspect a great deal, Wichard

**Shak:** Maybe all human feelings are non-physical, and therefore spiritual.

**Reaser:** they are just different aspects of the same thing

**Reflection:** yes, in spiritual exercises tend, Marya, to be more intuitive, and holistic processes, rather than analytic deductive processes, and as such are hard to define often with great specificity (although this is often true of artistic exercises)

**Renald:** Oswy... it seems a matter of attitude, to me. How that relates to emotions, I m not sure.

**Teleo:** The mine engaging in thought can not obtain Bliss. The mind thinks about things . if you think about things and obtain Bliss imo, that is because thinking has been bypassed..

**Teleo:** mind

**Teleo:** 8

**Simulat:** its got to do with the definition that I just gave Wichard - but that's must my own definition :-)

**Shingles:** they are activity, which is not an object of itself, but motion within objects, Shak

**Sage:** not bad, Marya, Sim, Wichard -- I might add that spirituality usually has a "receptive" element to it -- it is usually associated with an acceptance of things holistically, that precedes any decomposition into parts.

**Reflection:** agreed sim about awe and reverence

**Oswy:** Shak would that not make all consciousness spiritual surely the spiritual is a particular set of feelings?

**Issakar:** Deeper understanding as the main spiritual experience is too intellectualist; what of the spiritual experiences achieved via dance, sex, prayer, commitment, etc.?

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**Reaser:** yet if we reject the non positive emotions the monster of the Id will appear apologies to the forbidden planet

**Renald:** Sage, I see at is both receptive and assertive. Of course, the individual practitioner's assertions are much smaller than what she's receiving. :-)

**Shak:** Os, anything which is non-physical must be spiritual, it seems to me.

**Shingles:** I suggested this: they are activity, which is not an object of itself, but motion within objects, Shak) Oswy

**Shingles:** so it is physical

**Shak:** Shingles, I'm not following, sorry.

**Sage:** Renald, I wasn't arguing 100% -- but I would definitely suggest it is dominantly receptive

**Reflection:** wichard, again meditation is probably not well characterized as a joyous intellectualism of the sort that lies in philosophical discussion

**Sage:** as one of its core characteristics

**Wichard:** If all consciousness is "spiritual" why do we need a concept of spiritual?

**Shingles:** I'm posing the physical presence of emotions, Shak

**Wichard:** You're right there, Reflection

**Reaser:** meditation can be very frightening we all have a dark side

**Oswy:** All we have now had bliss and deeper meaning introduced also the idea that spirituality can't be articulated.

**Renald:** Issakar, that's the body participating wholly...

**Shak:** OK, we disagree. Electrons move, but they don't add up to grief or joy.

**Wichard:** But there is that joyous centre that can come during meditation which I find to be a cognitive and emotional response to the thoughts during meditation.

**Reaser:** ask the electrons

**Sage:** nicely put, Shak :)

**Simulat:** I would bet that not all people are spiritual Wichard - lots of people seem to have other things on their minds

**Oswy:** I don't see how it can be communicated if it can't be articulated so it is some sort of private emotion. Also what is deeper meaning?

**Wichard:** I don't see the need to label it with "spirituality"

**Shingles:** but the glands and interacting synapses and dietary contents of the body interact in a way that the emotion experienced is a side-effect, Shak

**Paula:** daft question: is there anyone over of 35 here?

**Dick:** me

**Reaser:** you would be surprised how spiritual people are

**Issakar:** Let's definite what spirituality isn't

**Shingles:** lots of people, Paula

**Shak:** Shingles, don't you think the human mind has experiences which can't be found anywhere else in the physical world?

**Teleo:** Sim, so you think that thinking blocks spiritual experiences?

**Marya:** Yes Paula, many people over 35

**Renald:** Oswy, I'm not sure I go along with it being something that can't be articulated -- any more than anything else.

**Reaser:** lol Reaser goes all quiet

**Oswy:** Os me I am 6598 years old.

**Marya:** lol

**Oswy:** But I am a dragon

**Paula:** lol

**Simulat:** lots of us Paula - but is that spiritual? :-)

**Renald:** I'm a bit over that, Paula

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**Paula:** life experience can influence the spiritual

**Reaser:** oh yes we don't have the physical without Viagra lol

**Oswy:** Well somebody raised the issue of it being beyond words.

**Marya:** That was me I believe :)

**Simulat:** no Teleo - I think that thinking is a part of being spiritual but that not all people think about spiritual things

**Renald:** Oswy, it can be.

**Shak:** Paula, life experience is actually the spiritual!

**Shingles:** difficult, Id say the uniqueness of each human being makes those experiences similarly unique, I don't know if anything similar is found elsewhere. I know that chimps have the power to have faith, anyway, Shak

**Sage:** Very Wittgensteinian of you, Marya, though I disagree in this case :)

**Paula:** and I thought that was wisdom

**Teleo:** ok Sim ... well I don't think you can be spiritual by thinking about it personally

**Simulat:** lots of people are only interested in earning money or football games

**Shak:** Shingles, maybe chimps have a spiritual side, then?

**Oswy:** Shak spirituality ahs to be more than just living it has to have something distinctive to pick it out surely?

**Shingles:** perhaps, yes, Shak

**Renald:** What I do think is that those pre-disposed to discount spirituality cannot understand what is communicated to them about it.

**Paula:** maybe being in "the zone" is a spiritual experience

**Simulat:** the spiritual stance is what motivates thinking for me Teleo - you may have a different approach

**Reflection:** Oswy, spiritual experiences are communicated much more broadly and effectively than are scientific and philosophical ones, only in their own languages, the difficulty is in translating those experiences into this sort of philosophical discussion

**Issakar:** The same emotions experienced while they earn money or watch sports are certainly evoked in a spiritual experience

**Reaser:** well we had to bring over my daughters cat this evening, for reasons not to be gone into. I spoke to all the animals before I brought him over and they all are accepting him what do you call that?

**Shingles:** Making love can approximate spiritual experience, f\*\*\*\*\*g I don't think can...

**Renald:** But I also think that there's a lot of commonality of experience that people assume is different, just because they don't like certain words, or ideas.

**Shak:** Os, I don't think so, I reckon S is just part of living, not the whole of it, of course.

**Issakar:** Say, the adrenaline rush of watching sports, compared to a mystical dance

**Issakar:** Agreed Renald

**Teleo:** well I do think that too mostly Sim.. I think spirituality or whatever it really is, recognises metaphor and guides thinking... so I suppose I would agree with you on that

**Oswy:** Shingles, Shak here is you example what is the distinction what makes the spiritual in this case?

**Sage:** Spirituality is intrinsically meaningful, in contrast to experiences that derive their meaning elsewhere.

**Paula:** maybe David Beckham feels he's connecting to a higher force when he's bending it on the pitch

**Shak:** Os, Shingles, the most obvious spiritual character is human will, since that is definitely not found anywhere in the physical world. The rest of human experience just follows when you think about it.

**Shingles:** Which example, sorry, Oswy?

**Wichard:** Reflection "spiritual experiences are communicated much more broadly and effectively than are scientific and philosophical ones"? That's because the speaker is preaching to those vested in the metaphor

**Issakar:** So, the question is, is 'spirituality' just a very poorly defined term applied to a vague set of subjective experiences applied to something, or is there still a characteristic universal to all spiritual experiences?

**Renald:** Wichard, that's true of science, too, in its own way :-)

**Oswy:** Shingles Love and f\*\*\*\*\*g you raised the issue?

**Sage:** Issakar -- I actually just suggested one :)

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**Wichard:** When groups profess to believe in "spirituality" they accept that type of communication without questions.

**Dar:** sort of like post modernists Wichard

**Shingles:** ah, yes, ill just compose something, Oswy

**Wichard:** Issakar: that seems circular

**Issakar:** Great minds think alike, Sage ;-)

**Shak:** Issakar, All of human experience is spiritual. When did a computer ever feel joy?

**Renald:** Oh, let's not bring computers into this...

**Reaser:** ask the computer

**Reflection:** agreed Wichard, and most of the human population is vested in this metaphor and communicate with each other in terms of it

**Issakar:** How do you feel it's circular, Wichard?

**Oswy:** All keep computers out of spirituality I have enough of a problem understanding human spirituality?

**Issakar:** Also, I don't understand how you mean Shak

**Sage:** Shak, no I don't think it all is. Many activities lack significant meaning to us. Spirituality is what breathes meaning into our choices and activities.

**Wichard:** And I make use of it sometimes, but I know I'm using a metaphor and plugging into various prearranged scripts.

**Reaser:** lol Oswy

**Shak:** Renals, When did a washing machine ever feel joy?

**Issakar:** We're speaking of the experience of human experience, Shak

**Reaser:** after a good rinse!

**Wichard:** Oh, dearie me, I feel a Turing Test coming on!

**Oswy:** I forbid the washing machine as an example of spirituality.

**Issakar:** Or, at least, our experience of human experience as cognized philosophically

**Simulat:** maybe they feel it all the time Shak but just can't be bothered telling you about it :-)

**Renald:** Shak, my peerage and that of washing machines are too different to allow the necessary communication for me to know. But given that a washing machine is an artefact with a clear function, I might hazard that it feels joy when in good working condition, and working :-)

**Dar:** so women aren't spiritual Oswy ( I know, bad misogynist joke )

**Paula:** it's all about the spectacle of it all really

**Oswy:** Wichard are you saying that all there is to it is that there is a metaphor that groups a certain sort of human experience that's it?

**Simulat:** Notice that my tongue is in my cheek :-)

**Shingles:** Making Love is a connection more profound than f\*\*\*\*\*g. F\*\*\*\*\*g can be thought of as sex, pleasurable, yet of no profound relation to your partner. Making Love is a connection far more complex, the partners connect, or are connected in ways far more profound, they have grown their life experiences together so much that they reach a state of more dreamlike than the state of f\*\*\*\*\*g (but that's just pulled out of my sleeve, ad hoc, not entirely happy with my terms I used there) Oswy

**Reaser:** yes washing machines should have rights too!

**Oswy:** Dar where did that come from?

**Wichard:** Oswy, For many individuals, spirituality has a valid meaning within their system of beliefs (they believe in spirits and the powers of these spirits); for others, spirituality is a set of quaint cultural beliefs that are used to control others.

**Dar:** washing machines forbidden to be objects with spiritual experiences

**Reaser:** all sex is connection on the deepest level if you deny that maybe sometime later you will become enlightened

**Shingles:** like a greater connection, a worship of something greater than yourself in the universe

**Renald:** Dar, you lose points for that just from the joke-construction aspect :-b Too obscure!

**Shingles:** which was God, for believers in Him

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**Oswy:** Shingles Yes I have come across this idea before the sense that the spiritual sees a pattern of more than normal complexity more than normal significance in things?

**Shak:** I guess I'm saying that you can look at a human person as a kind of machine, and from that perspective there would be nothing spiritual, just the physical working.

**Wichard:** And there's also a bit of the mind/body separation in "spirituality" that I can't abide

**Dar:** Ren, so be it, not like this convo has many points to begin with.

**Paula:** I'd rather have a washing machine than a man

**Wichard:** So would I, Paula

**Sage:** Wichard, I think it depends how you interpret the language. :)

**Reaser:** yes they are more reliable

**Renald:** Shak... one CAN look at a human being as a kind of machine. That leads to certain conclusions. One NEED not do so, however.

**Reaser:** lol

**Shingles:** If a definition could be found of Spirituality, I'm thinking that could be it, Oswy

**Shak:** But as soon as you look at a human person as a person, with a mind like yours, sharing the same sort of experiences, you're past the physical and onto the spiritual.

**Paula:** and you don't have to cook them dinner

**Oswy:** All I think Wichard is moving us into question 3 but that's fine he is really giving the idea a good kicking ie its manipulative and primitive.

**Reaser:** right on sister!

**Reaser:** a 60's expression

**Wichard:** Shak, I don't get that

**Oswy:** What say you men and women of spirit?

**Renald:** Primitive is a badge I wear proudly :-)

**Reaser:** me too

**Reflection:** one of the important things for us to remember, I think, is that despite the obvious power of science and philosophy to define "validity" objectively, these human memes have failed to meet the human emotional needs of the mass of humanity who continue to rely more or less exclusively upon spirituality of this, and until science and philosophy understand these subjective foundations of human existence far better they will not be providing broadly useful alternative phenomenologies

**Renald:** And almost anything CAN be manipulative.

**Dar:** Aristotle's theory of the celestial spheres was primitive.

**Shingles:** well perhaps allowing that spirituality is part of the universe already might solve that, Wichard

**Simulat:** I could tell from the cigar Renald :-)

**Oswy:** Shingles I missed that please repeat what is the definition?

**Shak:** Wichard, no physical machine ever had a feeling. That's physical.

**Shak:** Human beings have feelings. That's not physical. It is spiritual.

**Wichard:** I'm not sure about my computer

**Shingles:** that's odd, "Oswy: Shingles Yes I have come across this idea before the sense that the spiritual sees a pattern of more than normal complexity more than normal significance in things?"

**Reaser:** but elegant Dar given the maths available it gave something to build on

**Wichard:** It seems to have bad days, but I know that I'm projecting

**Simulat:** Shak - we have feelings Don't we? And we are machines too - wonderful machines but still physical machines

**Paula:** feelings, emotions? Just a chemical reaction?

**Teleo:** There is an Inca mountain which at a certain time every year casts a shadow which depicts a Puma cat chasing an Inca being carried by her love. You don't need language to see these correspondences in nature. Those connections are likely driven by meaning and emotion and wonder.

**Issakar:** Doesn't matter for the question of spirituality, really.

**Oswy:** Right Shingles so I have given a definition that is adequate?

# Second Philosophy

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**Wichard:** I think feelings are emotions thoughts. Someone could program a machine to have such "thoughts"

**Shingles:** i think in fact we are organisms, arguing that we are machines implies we were created to a design, Sim

**Reaser:** but make my life much richer for those chemical reactions

**Shak:** Sim, I think you're wrong there. I don't know, and can't conceive, of any machine that could have free will.

**Sage:** shingles/Oswy -- I would say that the spiritual refers to the label we give to the source of meaning/significance -- to the extent that particular events appear more significant or meaningful, we could say they are more deeply infused or touched with spirituality, rather than spiritual intrinsically.

**Shingles:** It accounts for enough for it to suit, I would say : yes, Oswy

**Reaser:** that is how ancients viewed slaves you know

**Simulat:** I think we were designed by evolution Shingles - and that evolution makes the most intricate machines in existence

**Oswy:** I would like to come back to Wichard's attack. Do we agree that the spiritual is more than just a piece of nonsense but that it is actually harmful?

**Wichard:** Teleo, the shadow of the mountain is interpreted by the viewers; there isn't anything intrinsic in the meaning of the shadow

**Oswy:** I don't think it is nonsense by the way.

**Renald:** No.

**Shingles:** not as I understand Spirituality, I admit that organised religion can be very harmful

**Shak:** Simulat, do you think you are personally free to decide things for yourself?

**Reaser:** I really feel you should all be free to think as you wish

**Dar:** false views and misinterpretations are harmful, and you can find many of those threaded through spiritual groups.

**Simulat:** Oswy - maybe spirituality is that for Wichard - but it's not like that for me

**Dar:** take heaven's gate

**Reaser:** if you don't like spirituality then that is ok

**Simulat:** Shak - I am autonomous but everything I do is for a reason - I don't believe in uncaused effects

**Wichard:** Spirituality can be a help or hindrance for humanity. Spirituality can produce common ethics and morals allowing a group to function and to prosper. Common strictures like "Thou shalt not murder" and "Go forth and multiply" can be applied to help build communities. But spirituality can divide when cultural groups with different belief and membership systems clash in defiance of some of the most basic strictures.

**Simulat:** and certainly want to have uncaused actions

**Issakar:** Are we moving onto question 3 or still have people arguing the illegitimacy of spiritual experience based on emotions having a possibly chemical origin? NM-- we're on 3

**Oswy:** Simulat but the non spiritualist could say you were deluded stuck in a primitive thought pattern science and rationality should snap you out of it .

**Shak:** Sim, you mean you never personally cause something to happen?

**Renald:** Wichard, none of that has directly to do with spirituality.

**Dar:** wichard, you seem to be confusing spirituality with religious codes

**Issakar:** I would say spirituality augments the awe of authority.

**Shingles:** There I would make a distinction between the spirituality of the individual and the organised religion of the community, Wichard

**Renald:** Or culture in general

**Issakar:** Or, can.

**Wichard:** Of course not, because I don't see spirituality as more that a mental system used to control others

**Shingles:** oh, good, we're all thinking similarly there

**Simulat:** Not that Shak I say I'm enmeshed in a web of causality

**Reaser:** well I like this primitive thought pattern then

# Second Philosophy

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**Issakar:** Some people are simply not convinced by arguments.

**Sage:** Shingles/Wichard -- I would be careful there -- spirituality involves a receptiveness to the meaning/significance of our context, and this receptiveness inherently opens us to the formation of group identities, for better or for worse.

**Issakar:** Or

**Simulat:** Oswy - I can't account for the way that everyone thinks - and I don't have to think they are right just because they say it

**Oswy:** Wichard its interesting that you see spirituality expressed in morals?

**Reaser:** thankfully

**Wichard:** Dar, religious codes are one form of spirituality

**Dar:** experience beats argumentation any day

**Renald:** Wichard, the question is whether that's a useful definition, and whether it's more or less useful than others.

**Dar:** but not all of spirituality - all poodles are dogs, but not all dogs are poodles

**Teleo:** the form of the shadow I think still has some ability to accord with Human experience though Wichard, I am still not sure... I can have an instrumentalist view of it or a more and deeper significant one... one can limit the other and does so. but to some these images depict eternal battles of light and dark and show human existence as having no intrinsic Value.. only the afterlife is important. I steer clear of people who see those things.

**Shingles:** Not for isolated worship, of one practicing decidedly in private. A Hermit is an example of this, Sage

**Shak:** Sim, I doubt if you really think that. If you did, you'd be repudiating responsibility for your actions, and you'd have to extend the same excusability to everybody else.

**Oswy:** Simulat but you might offer a defence by attacking their position as inadequate and emotionally and intellectually thin. That's how I would attack Wichard

**Reaser:** all poodles yap, but the smaller ones more so lol

**Shingles:** May we use the word 'challenge' instead of 'attack'?

**Issakar:** A particular state of being must be invoked which allows for the receptivity of argumentation to change one's mind about something-- mantras, prayers, pomp, servants bowing down, glitter, showcase of power and enourmation serve to change one's temperament for the receptivity of particular ideas

**Sage:** shingles, I think the deepest forms of spirituality necessarily involve our connections with other people

**Dick:** attack is philosophically legitimate word

**Oswy:** Yes challenge is better thanks

**Renald:** Sage... connections. Not necessarily to people, though those are very important.

**Dar:** media Issakar?

**Reaser:** well said Sage

**Simulat:** well - responsibility is another topic Shak - but I did say that I think of myself as autonomous - I act for reasons of my own

**Shingles:** So, without other humans, spirituality does not occur, for you, Sage?

**Issakar:** Or the modern instance, yes, media, Hollywood, etc.

**Dar:** I wouldn't consider methods of spreading dogmas spiritual per se, but I suppose some would.

**Simulat:** That is, I observe my situation and decide what is the best thing for me to do in it

**Wichard:** I think social connectivity and community are very important aspects of human social functioning, but that's what it is not some spirituality

**Sage:** shingles, I think it occurs through our anthropomorphism of our environment still, but it is not as full

**Shak:** Sim, I'm saying that when you act for reasons of your own, that's spiritual.

**Shingles:** agreed, Wichard

**Simulat:** you, in the same situation may decide to do something else - but we are both acting on our reasons

**Renald:** Wichard, again we have demonstrated distaste for certain words and ideas as much as anything else.

**Shingles:** there I might agree with you Sage

**Oswy:** All we seem to be agreeing that spirituality is useful but for different reasons curious?

# Second Philosophy

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**Shak:** Sim, when I act on reasons of my own, I'm always conscious I could have done otherwise.

**Wichard:** And, Shak, I interpret that as cognitive.

**Renald:** Oswy, I don't even hear that much agreement :-)

**Sage:** So if the heart of it is our receptiveness to our connections with others, and this is the same kind of receptiveness I think that binds together cults. Trying to separate spirituality into the 'good' kind and the 'bad' kind is a mistake imo.

**Shingles:** I think we all have arrived at a distinction between the organised practice of religion and the individual feeling of the spiritual, Oswy

**Simulat:** sure Shak

Issakar laughs

**Issakar:** Luther's project.

**Wichard:** It is both a help and a hindrance

**Oswy:** Renald well those who believe in it see its use for them personally and the biggest opponent Wichard sees some sort of utilitarian value

**Shak:** Wichard, sounds to me like you're saying we're deluded about free will?

**Teleo:** well yes I agree too Sage.. I think Spirituality can not possibly emerge without other people.. not in any extended or highly meaningful way anyway.

**Renald:** Only as a means to manipulate groups, though.

**Renald:** Sorry, disconnected.

**Wichard:** Oh? Do we have free will? That's a big topic for another day, I'm sure

**Dar:** most of my 'spiritual' practice has been done in isolation.

**Sage:** Shingles, I was actually cautioning against such a distinction

**Renald:** Oswy, Wichard seems to see it only as a means to manipulate groups.

**Simulat:** That's what happens when we have many choices and decide for this or that reason to do this thing rather than that thing Shak

**Shingles:** What about rather a connectivity to ones environment instead Sage?

**Shingles:** I'm sorry; I don't see the danger of it, Sage

**Sage:** shingles, the most meaningful part of our environment are the people in it

**Wichard:** Perhaps, "spirituality" can also be a means of self manipulation.

**Reaser:** but we have a sense of wonder even as small children do you think that is because of our physical link to our mothers?

**Shingles:** That's a value you might hold, I'm not sure that all of us hold that value, Sage

**Renald:** Well, in many ways, each of us in isolation knows herself as such through previous relation to other people. So that even when connecting purely in isolation to environment or "universe", there's a social element.

**Reflection:** I think the connection thing, is not so much about "others" but includes them, spirituality seems to have to do with breaking the bonds of alienation that my complete identification with my ego, or that which resides inside my epidermis creates

**Shingles:** I love it, Reflection

**Renald:** It can be that, yes.

**Wichard:** Is my computer more valuable than some people??? Hmmm, I'm not sure I want to go there....

**Reaser:** maybe we are sad at being born

**Oswy:** It is interesting that we have come back to connectivity many see this as the essence of spirituality ie it gives a heightened pattern to the universe a sense that all things are connected?

**Wichard:** And I see connectivity as very important, but I don't see it as requiring "Spirituality"

**Simulat:** yes Reaser - when we are born we get trapped in a world we didn't make :-)

**Teleo:** Shing.. Its not an attempt at a value it is an attempt at an accurate depiction of the reality of the Human condition and Human nature.. that one can drop this value or that is proof of its provenance.

**Renald:** Oswy, to me it is a matter of asserting, refining, the order of the universe and one's place in it. That involves lots of patterns.

**Dar:** I think united might be a better term than connected

# Second Philosophy

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**Sage:** well shingles, let me put it this way, I think if spirituality is that which lends meaning/significance to our experiences/actions, then we can get a lot more meaning/significance with the reciprocation of others than we can without. Hence, the depth is intrinsically limited if you take people out of the equation.

**Wichard:** And many of those patterns are chaotic and recursive -- I find them beautiful, even when they frighten and inspire awe.

**Oswy:** Sage I would agree with that.

**Shingles:** I'm taking heavy fire, ill try responding to all of it

**Sage:** and the meaning/significance achieved by this depth inevitably leads us to trust people, and opens the door to manipulation, and that's just life.

**Renald:** Wichard, if I were having this discussion just with you and like minded people, I would not use the term "spirituality" at all -- it's obviously unworkable for you.

**Issakar:** Regarding this connectivity, I was going to raise a point about exclusivity which so often accompanies spirituality

**Shingles:** or that we experience being more connected to another being than usual, which can be a supernatural being (in some understanding) but one could ascribe it to other humans, ie a being greater than oneself

**Reflection:** so Wichard, can you feel connected to the cosmos through a purely intellectual exercise?

**Wichard:** I do think that connection to the universe is intellectual

**Reaser:** I think so

**Renald:** It CAN be

**Issakar:** Wichard could, I wouldn't doubt it

**Oswy:** Shingles you introduced the deity word again

**Shingles:** that accurate describes values, yes Teleo, I was simply pointing out its not a universal value, Teleo

**Birric:** Yes you can

**Teleo:** Big it up Ren

**Dar:** isn't unity with the universe rather, well, given

**Issakar:** Uni-verse

**Dar:** not like I'm apart from it

Issakar grins

**Renald:** heh... Teleo... I just have trouble with all the absolutes being thrown around

**Dar:** not like there is the universe, then some gap in which i reside

**Oswy:** Issakar what was your point about exclusivity?

**Reaser:** when I studied maths all be it at a low level I once got this wondrous feeling of connectedness

**Dar:** I'm not other than the universe

**Simulat:** but is the universe other than you Dar?

**Wichard:** Ah, yes, the certainty of proof in the mathematical system is an aesthetic experience

**Oswy:** All Right we are coming up to time and some people have to go. I want to thank everyone the debate has pushed me more down the road to a definition

**Shingles:** I think you are correct to pose that. I indeed would say that this grander connectivity to ones environment would be less available than a grander connectivity to another human being, Sage

**Sage:** Shingles, and this grander connectivity is what opens the door to manipulation, shingles. There is no way around this imo.

**Simulat:** Thanks Oswy

**Issakar:** So, is exclusivity inherent to this connectivity and wholeness characteristic we are applying to spirituality? I would say yes, but it does problematize that characterization of spirituality

**Wichard:** Shingles, that seems anthrocentric to me.

**Sage:** Me too Reaser -- I love math -- but it's even better when you pass that feeling on to another, or receive it from them.

**Renald:** Issakar, I don't find that inherent at all.

**Oswy:** I think there remains the gap between those who see nothing special about the spiritual in the sense that we can already adequately account for it and those who see it as a genuine probably internal human phenomena.

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Renald grits his teeth

**Dar:** exclusivity is an aspect of cults, cutting one off from their other relations to build and strengthen new ones.

**Reaser:** oh yes when you see that I get it expression it is truly spiritual Sage

**Shingles:** Yes you are right to say that, but viewing as I do that all human interaction is based upon mutual manipulation, I don't feel daunted by that prospect (we'll discuss that another time) Sage

**Oswy:** Those who see that alter are moving towards an idea of heightened awareness of complexity and human interconnectedness as a real phenomena and I am attracted personally by that.

**Renald:** I find the need for one answer problematic at best.

**Shingles:** One cannot escape oneself, I'm not sure what you're implying, Wichard

**Issakar:** Not really. I might experience something spiritual and feel it exclusive of myself. Exclusivity is a notable element --exception at least-- to the model of oneness

**Sage:** shingles, I'm just suggesting that spirituality is essentially the stimulus for organized religion -- and more generally, for group identity formation. Because it feels good to be connected. And I don't think there's any algorithmic way to slice those behaviours away from spirituality in general.

