

Spiritual Evolution - Articles of Faith

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Holistic Integration - As a spiritual being the individual is not alone in the universe. Although different individuals and religions explain the spiritual reality or force in different ways, all are describing the same thing. Immanence and transcendence are both sources of grace or spiritual awareness, and they are integrated in the holistic process of Spiritual Evolution.

Process Theory and Theology -

As we learn to apply natural law to our use of the laws-of-nature we advance our experience and wisdom through the concept of process theory, and this advances humanity in spiritual awareness through the concept of process theology.



Material-Spiritual Nature - There are two aspects of the universe, both of which humans are active within: the material which is subject to the “laws-of-nature” which we know through science and our senses, and the spiritual which is subject to “natural law,” which we know through transcendence or immanence or both.

Time and Timelessness - Time exists both on the physical level of reality and on some levels of the spiritual reality, while an overall, greater level of spiritual awareness exists outside of the realm of time as a form of energy existing in all things, for which may be used the term God/dess.

Creation and Transformation - Conception and birth into the material aspect of the universe creates a spiritual awareness or soul, some aspect of that awareness or soul is then released into the spiritual aspect of the universe upon death of the physical body, and all life may have an existence on the spiritual plane both during life and after death.

Physical and Spiritual Realities

Spiritual Evolution begins where logic and philosophy end. Logic only takes us as far as the concept of, “I think, therefore I am.” (Rene Descartes, 17th Century) This suggests that as far as we are aware of our own consciousness, we have evidence that we ourselves exist, yet we must take the existence of everything else beyond ourselves as an article of faith, as everything else could be as a dream. In fact since our memories of reality change with time, we are sometimes confused between what was in a dream we have had and what we have actually experienced.

Agnostics affirm that a spiritual reality is unknowable, while atheists rule out the possibility that other forms of spiritual awareness exist, in either the same way that, or in different ways than we ourselves exist. Yet, if one is willing to believe that one’s own consciousness is not alone in the universe, then absent any evidence to the contrary, it may be affirmed that all religions and spiritual paths are describing the same spiritual reality in different ways. In fact most all of the world’s religions agree on two fundamental aspects, those being the various ways of presenting the moral dictum of the “Golden Rule,” and the concept that “God is light.” Spiritual Evolution affirms that as individuals we are not

alone in the universe, and on some level all life shares some aspect of the same basic spiritual nature, just as we share aspects of the same material nature.

As the concept of Spiritual Evolution recognizes a multi-faith culture, it therefore includes in addition to a respect for various religious traditions, also a respect for each individual's chosen spiritual path, whatever that may be. Among other things, this may result in a form of integration of the ideas of an external revelation (transcendence) and of an intuitive nature (immanence) as different sources of grace, both within ourselves and via a multi-faith culture. Spiritual awareness, or grace and inspiration, can result from either a transcendent or an immanent nature, and a true spiritual awareness must balance these two concepts. Thus, "Holistic Integration" is the first article of faith of Spiritual Evolution.

The question then advances to how do we decide what is truth and what is not? Each of us, ultimately, has to answer that question for ourselves, as there are many competing theories and faiths. As Spiritual Evolution affirms that there are two different aspects of the universe, a material aspect of which our bodies are a part, and a spiritual aspect of which our awareness or soul is a part, then the human body, and more precisely the human brain, is the juncture between the material and the spiritual aspects of the universe. Humans therefore are active on both levels of reality, the physical and the spiritual while we are alive, the latter through prayer, meditation, ritual and other ways of which we may not be aware. Death may then sever our connection to the material plane and liberate our souls to a greater or at least a different spiritual awareness. This "Material-Spiritual Nature" comprises the second article of faith of Spiritual Evolution.

Spiritual Evolution assumes that once an awareness is created (via conception into the physical aspect of the universe) some aspect of that awareness continues to exist beyond death. This may or may not be true of all living things. We simply have no evidence whether dogs and dolphins have souls exactly like ours, much less grass and protozoa. We may believe, however, that life is a spiritual quality, and that all forms of life have some degree of awareness. It would be logically consistent then to believe that it is possible that all life has an existence in the spiritual reality, both during and after life, just as do we.

Aspects of an individual's awareness, consciousness, soul, and/or spirit, each of which could be defined differently, may continue to exist after the death of the physical body, while these qualities may not have existed before conception. As we can have no proof of any of this, it is simply a choice made by Spiritual Evolutionists to believe that while in the present "I think, therefore I am," in the past this being of ours was created with conception and in the future it will continue beyond death. This logic-of-faith assumes a linear time-frame of past, present and future, and an ongoing process of change. "Creation and Transformation" is the third article of faith of Spiritual Evolution.

Law-of-Nature, Natural Law and the Problem of Evil in the Universe

Spiritual Evolution affirms that there is a correlation in the nature of the two forms of reality, or aspects of the universe, that we humans must learn to manage in order to happily live. The material aspect of the universe seems to be subject to a certain body of rules that we understand through science, physics, chemistry and so on, which we may call the "laws-of-nature." Similarly the spiritual aspect of the universe may also be subject to a body of law, sometimes called metaphysical law or "God's law," which we may call "natural law." Just as the laws of physics, chemistry and of all the natural sciences are immutable or beyond our ability to change them, and just as we are subject to these laws of nature and can only seek to understand and to live with them, so also are we subject to natural law. Just as we seek to learn the laws-of-nature, so also might we seek to learn and live by natural law.

The concept of natural law presents the ideals of justice, love and nurturance as being on the order of immutability. Breaking these metaphysical laws, as any in the physical sciences, unavoidably returns negative consequences. Living with and respecting natural law as the basis for how we utilize the laws of nature is the manner in which we, uniquely situated between the realms of the physical and the spiritual aspects of the universe, can best honor and most completely realize our full potential as human beings.

We know the laws-of-nature through the evidence that we gain through our senses of taste, touch, sight, smell and hearing. How then do we know natural law? There are different theories about the origin of our awareness of grace and inspiration, and our sense of right and wrong. The primary ones of which I'm aware are that the source of our spirituality may be either an external revelation (transcendence) or an intuitive nature (immanence), or both. Our awareness and expression of spiritual truth must inform and balance our economic and political lives, or how we manage our time and provide for our happiness in the physical world.

The problem of evil, however, interferes with our quest for happiness. Defining evil as the breaking of natural law assumes an objective perspective regarding ethics, or how we define good and bad, our moral duty, and the development of the individual as a result of our addressing of the daily issues confronting us. Yet is there an ethical position to be taken in the "moral relativism" of the big-fish-eating-little-fish food chain, where something that is good for the big guy is bad for the little guy? Objectively, a higher good could be said to be served by these chains of successively larger tragedies, as the cycle of life comprises an ecological system, yet the experience of being eaten can always be defined by the little guy as evil! How does one know when it is right to sacrifice the self to a larger good?

Every major religion has a maxim similar to the Christian "Golden Rule" and the Pagan "Rede," relating in mutual context the subjective and the objective perspectives. "Do unto others as you would have they do unto you" asserts that individuals must consider the self from the other's perspective, while "In that it harm none, do what ye will" asserts that the decision to act must begin with an assessment of the affects of those actions upon others before one follows through.

We can also see the issue of "moral relativism" in view of the "silver lining syndrome." In some cases, evil can result in good things happening. A forest fire may kill, yet it also opens the forest and provides a quicker release of phosphorus needed as a nutrient for new plants. War kills, yet the necessity for self-defense has led to the discovery of vast numbers of beneficial technologies that might not have been created otherwise, or created as quickly. By that token, should the Nazi's torturous medical research on prisoners be available to help other people or not? It is said that the pharmaceutical industry benefited from Nazi medical research. There certainly can be situations of unmitigated, absolute evil, and at some point we simply have to draw a line and make a statement, one way or the other. For this we seek to know and apply natural law. The concept of natural law encourages the expansion of our concern and motivation from what is good for the individual, or just our own needs and wants, to what is good for everyone, the world, and ultimately the focus upon transcendent values of peace, justice, nurturance and happiness.

The seat of authority over individual choice is always the individual conscious, inner light, or awareness of truth and justice. However inspired, the expression of individual awareness of philosophical or spiritual truth and justice may be considered to be one's representation of "natural law." A culture, then, must be able to trust in each person to manage their participation in society according to common positive values such as peace, equality, compassion, tolerance and justice. Accomplishing this requires an ongoing emphasis upon acculturation, education and spiritual instruction.

God/dess, the Spiritual Realm, and the Question of Time

In the physical reality our senses provide for us our understanding of time as we experience change, while generally our faith provides for us our assumptions about whether or how time may exist in the spiritual reality. The question of time provides a basis for projecting some aspects of the nature of the spiritual reality, including the definition in Spiritual Evolution of “God/dess.” One may choose to represent the spiritual force of the universe as God/dess as we don’t seem to have a gender-neutral term, which is needed given that gender presumes sexual reproduction, which it would seem, is only relevant to the material realm and not the spiritual realm. As the term “God” is generally represented as a patriarchal male, a term that does not affirm a hierarchical nature, as well as one that is gender-neutral, would be preferred. Thus one may use the term “God/dess,” while we continue to look for a term that better represents the articles of faith of Spiritual Evolution.

Considering that linear time as we know it (past, present and future) exists in the physical reality, essentially providing for the linear cause-and-effect of the laws-of-nature, the question arising is then does time also exist on the spiritual level of reality, or is the spiritual realm outside of the realm of time?

If, as written in the previous section, natural law holds that “breaking ... metaphysical laws ... unavoidably returns negative consequences,” then this suggests that the linear process of cause and effect, and therefore time, must exist in the spiritual realm. Further, considering the third article of faith, that “I,” or one’s awareness or soul, did not exist before conception and birth, and that then “I” enter the spiritual reality upon death, this would imply that there was a period of time on the spiritual realm when “I” did not exist. Thus, we may believe that time must exist on the spiritual level of reality.

However, if one held to this idea of time existing in the spiritual realm, a person would have to refuse to believe that it is possible that any spiritual entity, being or force could be simultaneously aware of the past, present and future, or have a timeless awareness, as is said to be the nature of God/dess. If indeed awareness exists only in linear time, one would also then have to refuse the idea that “God/dess is light,” and that God/dess is in all things as a form of energy, including both material and spiritual aspects of the universe. This latter idea forms the congruence between physics and metaphysics, where it is said that matter and energy are interchangeable. How can we deny these possibilities?

The solution is to place our faith in the idea that there must be different levels of awareness or of being in the spiritual realms. On the lesser level time would exist, change would take place, and the beings there would be subject to the concept of “as on Earth, so in Heaven.” The greater level of the spiritual realm would then be where God/dess would be found, defined therefore as beyond the realms of time, as a form of energy permeating all of reality, the physical as well as the spiritual. This view of “Time and Timelessness” is the fourth article of faith of Spiritual Evolution.

The Bible and the Word of “God”

The Bible is often presented as a collection of writings inspired by God, or that God caused humans to write. Therefore the Bible is “God’s word.” In this section and later when referring to the Bible the Biblical term “God” will be used for the spiritual force of the universe, rather than the term adopted for Spiritual Evolution of “God/dess.”

In considering the Bible, two issues come to mind. First, are there other writings also inspired by God? Or are all of them in the Bible and there have been none either before or after? And second, if there are other God-inspired writings, how was the decision made as to what to include in the Bible and what not?

When studying the history of the Bible it is found that there was much debate in the Catholic Church about what writings to include and which to exclude. For example, Revelations was added hundreds of years after the original Bible was compiled, and what became Revelations was only one of many versions of what are called “apocalyptic texts.” The issues in this history are often as much political as they are spiritual, having to do with what various Popes and others felt would represent the Catholic Church in the way they wanted it represented. Given the evident nature of the Catholic Church as being rather authoritarian, patriarchal, oppressive and obsessed-with-wealth-and-power, it would appear that many aspects of the Bible are much less the “word of God” than statements justifying the existence of the Roman Catholic Church.

True, Protestants have reinterpreted the Bible to justify their own faith, so the question remains, “are their other writings inspired by God?” In addressing this question consider the more basic question as to the nature of “God.” In the articles of faith of Spiritual Evolution covered thus far, “God” would be, among other things, natural law, by which we know the spiritual aspect of the universe, and which we seek to apply in our lives as we also apply the laws-of-nature. As we all may have an awareness of natural law, might any of us write words thus inspired, and might this very writing that you are reading be inspired by God? Certainly there are religious perspectives that suggest that we all ought to inform all of our actions and words according to natural law or God’s law. The Bible may certainly then be the “word of God.” So also are my words and yours, in so far as we seek to make them consistent with natural law.

The Bible then is special, but it is neither the first word nor the last word with regard to natural law or “God’s word.” Especially given that many of the stories in the Bible came from earlier myths and stories from other religions, the Bible is only one among many “sacred scriptures.”

Time, Process and Spiritual Evolution

Returning to the issue of time and the apparent nature of the interaction of the spiritual and the material aspects of the universe, consider the wobbling of the Earth's axis. It's a slow wobble, taking approximately 26,000 years to describe one circle. Astronomers and astrologers divide this slow wobble into 12 parts, each comprising one age of around 2100 years, and they name each of these 12 ages after the constellation of stars to which the Earth's axis points over time.

What is interesting is that Jesus Christ appeared at the beginning of the Piscean Age around 2000 years ago. Now many Christians believe that the beginning of the Aquarian Age will witness the second coming of Christ. Astronomically we are now in the transition period between the ages.

To establish in another way the significance of this period of the change of the ages, consider the concept of covenants, or agreements made between God and humanity.

Remember that in the Old Testament it was necessary for Priests to make burnt offerings upon altars, preferably rams, in order to earn God's favor or attention. This was the Age of Aries (the ram). With the advent of Christ and the Age of Pisces (the fish), this process was no longer necessary. The individual could now commune directly with God or Christ through prayer, and thanks to Protestantism, without even the intermediary of a Priest. This illustrates a change in God's covenant with humanity, a change in the agreements or the mode of communication between the spiritual or heavenly realm and the human or temporal realm. The two became closer, more directly linked. Now as we enter a new age, the Age of Aquarius (bearer of water as a libation or sacrifice), might we expect to once again experience a change in the covenant (or the relationship) between the spiritual and the physical realms?

What might be the nature of this change? It may be that humanity will continue to become closer to God/dess, or better understand, respect and live by natural law.

Spiritual Evolution suggests that we are involved in an ages-long process of Spiritual Evolution, and this can be related to both the philosophy of process theory and the concept of "process theology." This view of a Spiritual Evolution also provides answers to the questions, "What may be the meaning of life?" and "What is the nature of reality?" The human race is gradually awakening to the understanding that our part is to center or to balance both the spiritual and the physical aspects of reality. Many spiritual leaders have said this through the ages, and we may become closer to that ideal through the future. Recognizing our place in the balance between spirit and matter is as much a process of spiritual awakening as it is of learning how to apply this wisdom to our manipulation of the natural world. It is this process of change in our world-view, this awakening to our responsibilities to the earth, to society and to ourselves, which characterizes the astronomical and astrological Age of Aquarius. "Process Theory and Theology" is the fifth article of faith of Spiritual Evolution.



Applications of the Articles of Faith of Spiritual Evolution

One of the primary ways of applying spiritual values to the material world, that is, how one may apply natural law in the manipulation of the laws-of-nature, is to support and work within systems of both privately-owned property and commonly-owned property, as both can be justified via natural law. In this way one may honor both the material and the spiritual aspects of being, balancing the two such that neither eclipses the other. Applying a set of articles of faith to our lives in the material world is the challenge that we all have of living according to our faith.

Material Spirituality

The term "material spirituality" was coined to represent an affirmation of the spiritual value of sharing, through balancing our material needs and wants with our spiritual ideals. This balance relates to how we may seek to apply the second article of faith, that of applying spiritual truth to one's economic and political life, or how we manage our time and provide for our own and other's happiness in the physical world. As such a balance requires a respect for both material and spiritual values, we may seek to manage our activities on both levels through integrating the two, seeking to remove any difference between faith and action in the world.



The following symbolic elements present the concept of material spirituality in a graphical manner:

- The SCALES is an ancient symbol for justice and law, and represents the need for balance in many aspects of our culture.
- The GLOBE or WORLD, suggesting the material universe, is balanced against the RADIANT EYE within a TRIANGLE, the symbol (used on the dollar bill) often representing awareness, spirituality, intuition (immanence), revelation (transcendence) or divine inspiration or providence. Balancing the world against the radiant-eye-within-triangle symbol suggests that materialism and spirituality must be integrated.
- The TRIANGLE itself integrates both stability (geometry) and change (math & science) suggesting that even as the characteristics of a thing changes with time, its basic nature remains unchanged.
- The CIRCLE of the globe represents the cycles of nature and of life, and again the balance of stability and change as through cycles even as things change they remain the same, or continually return to similar states.
- The INFINITY symbol represents time, and being the base of the symbol, suggests that time-based economics serves as the foundation of a lifestyle affirming the ideals of MATERIAL SPIRITUALITY.

These ideals also represent the balance of POSITIVE LAW, or human-made laws, with NATURAL LAW, as they affirm our desire to respect in our material lives the immanent and/or transcendent values of peace, justice, nurturance and harmony.

Parallel Culture

We may consider those who seek to balance spiritual and material values in their lifestyle as comprising a culture which is parallel to the dominant, predominately material culture. The dominant culture tends to assume a “scarcity paradigm” through a possessive, monetary economics. In contrast the “plenty paradigm” of the parallel culture affirms that there is plenty for all when we share, through forms of non-monetary economies.

The parallel culture is a "chaordic" or chaotically-ordered, evolving community network, affirming the positive values of personal, social and environmental responsibility. These values are expressed through a decentralized, human-scale society governed through forms of consensus decision-making process. The network is comprised of a number of different affinity groups focused upon different goals and activities. Although the parallel culture seeks to build the alternative to the scarcity paradigm of the dominate culture, which is based upon the negative values of possessiveness, artificial scarcity and competition, with a plenty paradigm based upon sharing, rational altruism and cooperation, the ideal of a parallel culture is to respect both the non-monetary economy of common property ownership, and the monetary economy of private property ownership. This balance of property ownership structures is reflected in the balance of spiritual and material values in the concept of material spirituality, which similarly respects the expressions of both transcendence and of immanence, through tolerance and religious pluralism.

Rational Altruism

The focus of the monetary economy, represented by the concept of the "scarcity paradigm," in which economic demand is created by the emphasis upon possessiveness and property rights, preventing sharing and resulting in the exchange economy, is often explained via the theory of "rational self-interest." In contrast, the parallel culture, of the "plenty paradigm" focuses upon the sharing economy of common property ownership, explained via the theory of "rational altruism." The paradigm shift is similar to the change of perspective from viewing a glass of water (representing the material content or value of the world, including both physical and intellectual property rights) as being half-empty, to it being half-full. The scarcity paradigm asserts the negative perspective that the pursuit of happiness requires a struggle for private wealth and power, while the plenty paradigm asserts the positive perspective that happiness is best provided when we affirm that there is plenty for all when we share. Rather than working for strictly the materialistic and temporal goals of personal wealth and power, rational altruism affirms one's intention to work for mutual benefit, social justice and ecological responsibility.

A lifestyle of caring, sharing and cooperation involves community-oriented processes of consensus decision-making, the building of intentional community, worker or community-owned businesses, consumer cooperatives and local currencies (these three can involve micro lending and socially responsible investing), and shared real estate equity (involving the two levels of site-value taxation and of equity accounts replacing rent). Other community-oriented programs include forms of neighborhood cooperation including community gardens, community-supported agriculture, neighborhood watch, block parties, home-schooling and community schools, alternative dispute resolution (providing services in mediation, arbitration, conciliation, facilitation and negotiation), community-oriented primary care (neighborhood-based counseling, primary medical care, public health, preventive health care and mental health services), and labor exchange systems and other forms of "time-based economics."

Time-Based Economics

In time-based economies the world's natural resources are shared, and individual labor contributes to a common wealth (by maximizing public goods and services) which provides for individual happiness through a system of "rational altruism." With a sharing of wealth, fear of economic loss or exposure (fear of scarcity) is reduced and greed is not rewarded. Happiness, then, is found as much in working for the good of all, as in work for personal benefit. In the plenty paradigm, the service or labor credit is the root of public good, and all work is valued equally. One hour is worth one credit regardless of who is working or what is done. "Service credits" or "time dollars" are exchanged, hour for hour, while "labor credits" may involve any of three different forms of labor sharing:

- **Anti-Quota Labor System** - The simplest form of time economy may be called an "anti-quota labor system" where there is no minimum labor contribution requirement (i.e., there is no "labor quota") Most cohousing communities and many community land trusts use such purely voluntary anti-quota labor systems. A common example of an anti-quota time economy would be where a church encourages its members to perform duties that the congregation has considered to be important to its mission, such as singing in the choir. When a church passes the collection plate, it earns money for the programs that it provides, including vocal music during the Sunday service. The portion of collection-plate income, member pledges, donations and other revenue not used for salaries or other compensation is then shared by the congregation for things such as building maintenance, choir robes and sheet music. Thus, aside from any paid labor, the non-compensated labor that the congregation provides to the church helps to earn revenue for exchange with the outside monetary economy. Within the church congregation, however, the anti-quota time economy is used to manage

a communal economy of sharing. An example of a church that followed its minister into forming an intentional community is Shepherdsfield Community in Missouri, which was originally a Lutheran congregation in southern California. That transition involved a change from an anti-quota labor system to a more specific work requirement that may be called a “fair-share labor system.”

- Fair-Share Labor System - In most large communal communities members make commitments to work in particular areas as their primary work role, often with members rotating among various full-time positions, which may be called a "fair-share labor system." Examples of community networks that had or continue to have fair share labor systems are: Israeli Kibbutzim, Japanese Yamagishi Kai, the US and Canadian Hutterite Colonies, and monastic societies. Fair-share labor systems tend to result in gender-specific work roles, with women in domestic or support services. Monastic societies usually have very specific labor-sharing expectations. For example, The Rule of St. Benedict written in the 6th Century CE specified work as a requirement of the Catholic monastic orders.
- Labor Quota System - A "labor quota" is a minimal required labor contribution for a person to maintain their membership in the community. Communities with labor quota time economies, counting one hour of work as one "labor credit," are usually secular, replacing a cultural, spiritual or religious orientation to fair-share work contributions with a commitment to a more quantifiable sharing process. Through a system of labor budgets the community as a whole decides its collective priorities by how it divides its labor supply. The entire labor budgeting process, along with income and expense projections, is repeated in regular planning cycles, serving to keep the members of the community empowered and invested in the communal society. Since a communal economy with participatory governance requires a considerable amount of communication in decision-making, authority is usually delegated to managers, co-managers or committees in each work area, with feedback and appeal processes serving the value of maintaining a community-controlled economy. Several communities using various forms of labor-quota systems comprise the Federation of Egalitarian Communities.

Communitarian Values

The challenge is to build a culture with a political-economic system that engenders in the individual an appreciation of others and a sense of responsibility for the environment that we share. Trust in one another and mutual responsibility are simple luxuries that are assured as we enjoy a lifestyle expressing communitarian values. Providing a safe and nurturing environment for children and seniors is an expression of communitarian values, as are the provision of services where people work together for mutual advantage and efficient resource usage. Communitarian values are experienced in forums where people resolve disputes or discuss opportunities or challenges, whether from within or from outside of the community. Communitarian values are supported by architectural and land use designs that encourage the random kindnesses and senseless acts of beauty encouraging positive interactions among people. And communitarian values nurture the development of friendships and the other primary and secondary social bonds that make of our lives a joy, a work of art, a labor of love, and an expression of our spiritual awareness.

Circle graphic by Don Lewis