

SPIRITUALITY



Spirituality can be thought of as the 'active ingredient' of major world religions. Why not think of the spiritual dimension as a kind of adventure playground, a place to learn in and have fun, a place in which to extend yourself, to grow?

Spirituality cannot be explored using scientific methods because it involves deeply personal, subjective experiences, and in this it differs from the over-riding ambition of science: to be objective. Both are necessary and appropriate, complementary formulas for discovering ourselves, each other, our environment, the universe... and especially an enduring sense of purpose and meaning.

According to researchers, children's spirituality flows through their capacities for spontaneous joy and wonder. A sense of fascination, of mystery, awe and delight, are facets of adult spirituality too. However, by the teen years, most people have developed a powerfully 'dualistic' understanding of themselves and the world, as if standing outside it. In this 'self/non-self', 'either/or', 'right or wrong' vision of the universe, opposing features are emphasized: either young or old, for example, not both at the same time.

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Spirituality, on the other hand, involves a 'holistic' appreciation of a universe in which everyone and everything is connected seamlessly with everyone and everything else.

The familiar 'yin-yang' symbol demonstrates this principle of wholeness in all scales, from infinitesimal to cosmic, as follows: the dark ground (yin) has a small central white spot, and the light ground (yang) has a small central dark spot. The entire symbol is to be imagined as dynamic, constantly changing. Just as day and night forever precede and become one another, what is light gradually becomes dark, and what is dark repeatedly becomes light. The opposites counteract, balance and turn into each other, like the changing seasons of the year.

According to Taoist tradition, Yin (the dark) and yang (the light) are extended to include several polarized forces in the universe, including night and day, earth and heaven, feminine and masculine. There are many opposites that similarly define each other, among them negative and positive, hot and cold, dry and wet, north and south, east and west, up and down, in and out, ancient and modern, evil and good.

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Without one, there cannot be the other. Wisdom involves remembering that such pairs always relate to one-another and are inseparable.

The new wisdom resonates powerfully with something already present, deep inside. It feels like a reminder and confirmation of something already known but forgotten.

Such revelations herald a kind of awakening, a key moment of transition on life's journey towards spiritual maturity. As the fallen leaf never rises to rejoin the tree, so is this a point of no return. The significance of these experiences is re-enforced by 'synchronicities' unexpected but meaningful coincidences,

such as may occur when two people meet for the first time, who later become life partners. Synchronicities and serendipities - unexpected discoveries - often go together. There is a kind of mystery about kairos. Kairos is spiritual time.