

40. Religion and Spirituality

Some argue Earth Citizen Principles and Values movements are religious. Their principles and values, and others layered on them, serve as foundational intentions informing thoughts, dreams, behaviors, plans, actions and subjective interpretations of life and activity for a majority of the world's population. They're used as a moral code or compass for many. We work out with them spiritually as we engage with life and others, and connect and create successful relationships and communities using them.

They provide meaning and guidance for billions. People gather around them, and discuss them, and our experiences with them. We reference them as we communicate our agreement or disagreement with what people say and do. They're used in legal cases to prosecute or defend actions. Art, books, music, laws, speeches, plans, media, complaints, agreements, and all kinds of people and things relate to them. They define integrity. They're involved, consciously or unconsciously, in much of human experience.

Others argue that Earth Citizen Principles and Values movements are not religious. Their principles and values have no reference to a "God," or any attributes, agreements or relationships with any deity. They're based in common sense, not mythologies or stories. No organization significantly profits from them any more than any others. There are no Earth Citizen priests invested with powers or privileges. They were arrived at and are revised as living things in our consciousness through collaborative, democratic and social processes, rather than imposed from above, authoritatively.

There's no official Earth Citizen church, temple, mosque or religious organization. They make no threat of consequences in some afterlife to try to force behaviors in this life. Nobody gets rich off of them. They incite no wars. They don't prohibit participation in any declared or undeclared religion. In fact, Sunni and Shia Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Jainism, Daoism and most branches of Christianity, including the Catholic Church, have generally declared that Earth Citizen Principles and Values are consistent with their beliefs, though there are still churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, and religious groups and sects that have rejected them, or not formally adopted or taken positions on them.

Spiritual movements and growth are active and widespread, within and without religious institutions. Personal and subjective spiritual experiences are valued and cultivated, wider and deeper than before, whether one claims to be religious or not. Far more people claim to be spiritual than religious now, and far more who claim to be religious are now engaged with personal spiritual practices and experiences.

Perhaps arguments about whether the Earth Citizen Principles and Values movement is religious are semantic and not ultimately important. What is indisputable and important is that enormous change has taken place all over the world, and Earth Citizen Principles and Values have been a big part of that.

Rising awareness of and concern about impacts of human activities and behaviors on environments and our efforts to change actions and behaviors to prevent climate, environment and resulting social harms are ultimately responsible for magnificently reduced human environmental, climate and social harms. Earth Citizen Principles and Values were part of those changes in many people.

Rising awareness of and concern about impacts and consequences to human lives and environments of unfairness, corruption, negative energies, structural problems, broken social systems and, ultimately,

our willingness and efforts to take action to change are responsible for the incredible rallying and huge changes in human governments and social systems. Earth Citizen Principles were part of that for many.

It was ultimately our willingness and efforts to change thoughts, behaviors, actions and ways we live that empowered widespread communities' movements, which have provided to so many valuable relationships, purpose, belonging, love, caring and sharing. Earth Citizen Principles were part of that.

Earth Citizen Principles and Values have become part of the fabric of life over much of the Earth now. Even if someone does not agree or engage with them personally, others they engage with likely do, and that affects interactions. Even if someone does not specifically recognize the impacts or influences of Earth Citizen Principles and Values on life, people and systems around them, they are there.

Many new religious and spiritual groups, practices and efforts have arisen, both within and without religious structures, and expansions of previously limited spiritual groups and practices have taken place in the last 40 years. Significant among them are Neo-Gnostics, Christ-Consciousness, Love-and-Above, and God Unionism within Christianity; Allah-ism and Mohammed-Consciousness in Moslem faiths; "Open and Rise" and Jewish Mysticism within Judaism; the global expansion of Hindu yoga, spiritual and meditation practices; the incredible spread of Vipassana and other meditation practices and Buddha-Consciousness in Buddhism; spirit medicine practices from shamanic cultures; Naturism; Neo-Animism; Gaia-ism; Mysticism; Atheist or Agnostic Spiritualism; Consciously Conscious; and In Spirit.

Neo-Gnostics believe God, heaven and hell are all around all of us, all the time. They're not mythical or limited to afterlives. Heaven is experiencing life lived in positive, virtuous or higher energies and states. Hell is experiencing life lived in negative, vicious or lower energies and states. God is the universal continuum of infinitely interacting energies that is all that ultimately exists. It's our state of being or consciousness, energies we mostly reverberate with, that determine whether we are in heaven or hell. We can affect that with our choices, intentions, thoughts, actions and behaviors. Choose heaven!

Christ-Consciousness followers believe Jesus of Nazareth was a great human-being hero and pioneer who was able to discover and explore higher states of being and consciousness, with great intention, effort and perseverance. He achieved higher awareness and became a master, and he came back to us, to those who had not experienced higher consciousness, out of love for all, to try to teach and help us to achieve higher states, for the many benefits that leads to. They believe their purpose is to try to follow in Jesus' footsteps, to follow his example and teachings, to raise their consciousness, energy and spirit and enter the Kingdom of Heaven, the realms of love and higher consciousness. We can and should endeavor to experience and exist in Christ-Consciousness, virtuous higher energy states Jesus lived in.

Love-and-Above practitioners believe Christ taught that love is the gateway to higher consciousness. We should focus on achieving states of conditional and unconditional love to pass through that gateway. "Fake it 'til you make it!" Intending and pretending to be in states of love help open and align us to love. Surrender lower energies. Seek higher energies. Once we pass through unconditional love into higher consciousness realms, we open to and may experience through grace even higher energies and states. Intend and cultivate energies, spirit and consciousness at the levels of love and above.

God Unionists believe God is everything there is, everywhere, always. We are all part of God, holographic reflections of All. However, we've forgotten or lost awareness of that, and we suffer and pine for reunion, usually unconsciously. We can raise our awareness and experience reunion with God,

feel and know personally that we are part of God. We do that by surrendering evil or negative energies and states and opening to, allowing, accepting and cultivating virtuous or positive energies and states. Achieving conscious union with God is our purpose and ultimate fulfillment and satisfaction.

Allah-ism in Islam is like God Unionism in Christianity. Allah is all. We exist to know and join Allah. Without personally experienced connection with Allah, all life is meaningless, hollow and mean. Cultivate that through prayer and intention. That connection is made as we release worldly worry and thought and invite Allah into the mosques of our hearts with pure love and joy. When we experience Allah enter and live in our hearts, we transform and are fulfilled. That's our purpose, what Mohammed learned and tried to teach us. Then, we're with Allah in heaven, even if we're also here on Earth.

Mohammed-Consciousness is like Christ-Consciousness. Followers believe Mohammed was a great human spiritual hero and pioneer who achieved higher states of being and consciousness, in which he experienced revelations, which, out of love for all, he tried to teach us, to help us pass through the gateway into higher consciousness. Emulate Mohammed and follow his example and teachings to raise our consciousness, energy and spirit and enter the Kingdom of Heaven. We can and should endeavor to exist in Mohammed-Consciousness, or the virtuous higher energy states Mohammed lived in.

Open and Rise came from the recognition that Judaism's archaic tribalism isolates and alienates Jews from the rest of humanity. It attempts to open, evolve and be more inclusive. It doesn't exactly endear Jews to others to have a religious belief that there is only one God, the Jews are His chosen people, and God doesn't care much for anybody else. Open and Rise espouses the belief that all humans are God's chosen people, Jews and non-Jews, and God wants all of us to raise our awareness or spirit and join Him. Open your hearts, open to others, love all, raise your energies and spirits, and be one with God.

Jewish Mysticism, like the rise of mysticism within other religions and outside of religion, is basically focused on cultivating deeply personal, subjective spiritual experiences and transformation, within the context of Judaism. It's less about what the religion says and more about what is revealed through personal mystical experience. Cultivate personal mystical experiences and allow them to transform you. Trust God in these experiences, surrender all to them, and the higher realms will open to you.

In the past, many were confused by Hinduism's rich complexity, with its 3+ million gods. In the 2020s, with publication of the IOKS Framework, many became aware of the dimension of consciousness, being or spirit that had been deeply and relentlessly known and explored in India for over 5,000 years. It was real and vital, intriguing and exciting. Interest grew globally. What is it, and how do we experience it? Yoga, known in the West mostly as Hatha Yoga, stretching and posing, became recognized as practices, potentially encompassing everything focused on achieving higher awareness, or union with the divine. People all over, within and without other religions, began experimenting with, adopting and adapting Indian meditation, yoga and other spiritual practices, and within Hinduism people became less engaged with complex esoterica and more engaged with finding and practicing that which raised consciousness.

In the past, many had been led astray thinking Buddhism was something to be understood intellectually, or that the Buddha was somehow unique or divine and to be worshipped. In the 2020s, more realized the Buddha never claimed to be divine and would have hated being worshipped, as a waste of time and diversion from what's important. The Buddha had realized higher consciousness, all the way to the top, to Nirvana, union with Universal Consciousness, beyond duality, as many in India had. His most valuable legacy was the technology of Vipassana, meditation practices he developed and taught that were

preserved and passed down for 2,500 years by monks in Myanmar. Let go of religion. Take it and trust. Just do these intense meditation practices and you'll open and experience higher consciousness, or achieve enlightenment, a state offering relief from suffering. Vipassana meditation spread like wildfire.

Buddha-Consciousness is like Christ- or Mohammed-Consciousness. Followers believe that the Buddha was a great human spiritual hero and pioneer who achieved higher states of being and consciousness, and experienced revelations, which, with love, he tried to teach us to help us achieve higher states. Emulate him and follow his example and teachings to raise energy and spirit and enter higher realms. Try to experience and exist in Buddha-Consciousness, the virtuous higher energy states he achieved.

Shamanic spirit medicine practices spread quickly and widely, starting in the 1960s. We're wired for their experiences, with brain receptors just waiting for these medicines. Famously in the 1960s, people in the West discovered and experimented with spirit plants and medicines, marijuana, LSD, iboga, DMT, magic mushrooms, ayahuasca and peyote, that create experiences in which we open, ego's suppressed or transcended, mental habits are broken, and profound energetic, hallucinogenic experiences emerge. However, past Western experiments and experiences with these substances had been largely ignorant, frivolous, recreational, random and unguided, largely because of their illegal status. They're legal now.

Shamanism teaches the importance and ways of intention, setting, preparation, reverence, ritual and expert guides in spirit plant technologies, for producing profound and valuable spiritual experiences. They're not often short-cuts to permanent transformation, but they can be profound and motivating experiences of waking and directly experiencing the energy matrix of the universe, receiving inspiration, interacting with consciousness outside bodies, resolving in a few nights emotional or psychological blocks and issues, like addiction, that might take 100s of hours on a shrink's sofa. Direct experiences of higher consciousness let us know they're real and inspire creating more lasting states of higher being. Guided spirit medicine experiences are now widely used in therapies, for traumas, addictions, physical and emotional issues, and end of life challenges, reducing fear of death in many.

Naturism practitioners believe we best and easiest experience higher consciousness in balanced, pure and healthy natural environments, where we are present, release acculturations, observe natural life and resonate in harmony with pristine nature energies. They have scientific support for arguments that plants resonate spirit frequencies in the "love range". Sitting quietly in environments with that energy, we naturally begin to resonate with love. Doing so enough or long enough moves us into and through the gates to higher consciousness. Naturists also believe there is profound knowledge and wisdom developed and embedded in natural systems that we can benefit from observing and adopting.

Animism is beliefs many native peoples, like Native Americans, had before Westerners subjugated them: everything is infused with, animated by spirit energies we can witness, experience, feel and appreciate. If we become sensitive to and appreciate and love spirit in others, we change and become higher beings. Our spirit energies rise and resonate with all. We attain higher consciousness, and there is more beauty. Be aware of and respect what is in nature. Take life only to sustain life. Let life thrive and thrive with it.

Pacha Mama, Gaia or Mother Earth beliefs recognize, appreciate and honor the spirit and life of Earth, as a living system, that which enables all of us to be and thrive, an intelligence that is still beyond most. The Earth is a living being and system, and we are like cells and organs that contribute as parts of that. That system is far greater than us. We are merely passing pieces of it. Be humble and grateful for that!

Mysticism is not a new term, but it has almost certainly never been acknowledged or practiced as widely as in the last 40 years. Mysticism is the cultivation of deep, personal, subjective spiritual experience, through various means, like ecstatic dance, deprivations, ritual, pain, meditation, devotion, purifications, or nature experience, rather than blind acceptance or faith in others. Mysticism is thriving now.

Atheist or Agnostic Spiritualism is basically people who don't believe in "God," but accept that there is a dimension of consciousness they want to explore and experience. Many are recovering intellectuals, scientists and capitalists whose path to spirit was things like the IOKS Framework, scientific exploration and validation of the dimension of consciousness, and their implications and prospects. Practitioners open and try to experience energy, spirit or consciousness shifts, often experimentally or scientifically.

Consciously Conscious focuses on creating personal experiences of "awakening," waking up to higher consciousness, through conscious intention and effort. They think we forget our higher being in the trauma of incarnating in life and under steady conditioning influences. We must intend to wake from the dream of our co-imagined realities and relax, trust, open, quiet, tune to and receive higher energies to reawaken our inner spirits. If we do, it's like a caterpillar emerging from a chrysalis as a butterfly, beautiful and newly capable of flight. Many Consciously Conscious practitioners attest to profound awakening experiences, and few deny there's something special going on with them.

In Spirit is a kind of neo-shamanic Indian yoga fusion. Its practitioners believe the essence of everything is its spirit or energy, and we are capable of directly perceiving and interacting at some level with that. They cultivate states of being in which they're sensitive to these energies and try to resonate with them, to personally experience the essence, nature or energy of things. They use plant and spirit medicines, meditations, stretching, exercise, right livelihood, living with integrity to values, and other experiences. It sounds batty to some, but IOKS energy measuring systems have verified at least some of these people really can change spirit energy measurements, in harmony with other objects and beings, or in isolation.

There are, of course, many other spiritual and religious practices in play now. Personal spiritual and energetic experience and growth are important values to many, and people experiment with different practices to find what produces something impactful for us. Some argue we are pursuing mass delusion, but millions of *OurStories* and other stories corroborate meaningful experiences in these pursuits. Something powerful is seeding, germinating, flowering and thriving in the midst's of these efforts.

If nothing else, religious and spiritual practices are much, much more tolerant of each other than before. With humility, they acknowledge we are not sure who knows best and should be listened to or followed more than others. All religious and spiritual practice is like the blind trying to point to the same "God", trying to know "it", find our way in the dark. Best wishes to all in that! New experiments are welcome. Let's try to learn from each other in that! Diversity gives us strength and helps us make progress.