

The background features a dark blue gradient with a starry space pattern. On the left side, there are several technical diagrams, including circular gauges with numerical scales (e.g., 140, 150, 160, 170, 180, 190, 200, 210, 220, 230, 240, 250, 260) and various circular arrows indicating motion or flow. The main text is centered on the right side.

WORKING VIRTUES
SESSION 4: SPIRITUALITY AND HOPE
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LARRY R. CHURCHILL
LARRY R. CHURCHILL@VUMC.ORG

2 CLARIFICATIONS

1. Egoless/Selfless -- what wisdom traditions teach is not selflessness, since all virtue systems must include care of and respect for oneself; but egoless activity and thinking, meaning not driven by desire to protect the shell I build around myself for presentation to myself and others to enhance my status; ego demands encourage comparisons and judgments, in the service of superficial, cultural values...
2. We can't think your way into understanding a virtue. This means that practice brings understanding. This does not mean that I can practice mindlessly. Virtues are habits of mind as well as habits of activity. Virtues must be practiced mindfully before they yield their rewards.

DEFINING 'SPIRITUALITY'

Defined by traditional understandings of religion:

“something that in ecclesiastical law belongs to the church or to a cleric as such”

Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (1986)

CONTEMPORARY DEFINITION OF SPIRITUALITY

A transformative way of being in the world

- This world, not some other one, or some future one
- Marked by certain kinds of experiences of something larger than ourselves, sensed as ultimately real, or sacred, with extraordinary power and meaning
- Sustained by practicing certain virtues
- Can include traditional religion, but is not confined to it

“TINTERN ABBEY,” WORDSWORTH, 1798

And I have felt

A presence that disturbs me with the joy

Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime

Of something far more deeply interfused,

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,

And the round ocean and the living air,

And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:

A motion and a spirit, that impels

All thinking things, all objects of all thought,

And rolls through all things.

A CAUTIONARY TALE

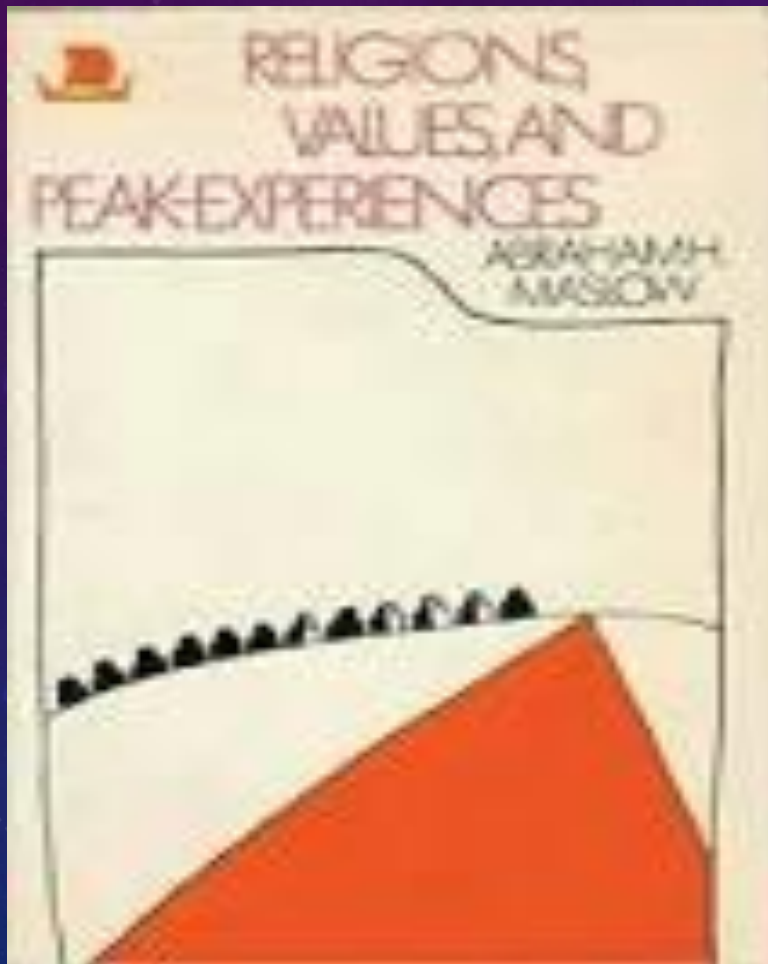
Question : “Are you religious?”

Answer: “No, I’m spiritual.”

A SHORT HISTORY : STUDY OF RELIGION AS A HUMAN EXPERIENCE LEADS TO CURRENT MEANING OF 'SPIRITUALITY'

- Joachim Wach (1898-1955) -- response of awe to what is perceived as ultimate reality
- Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) – the holy as numinous (mysterium tremendum)
- Mircea Eliade (1907-1986)-- division between sacred/profane
- William James (1842-1910)–democratizing the religious impulse

ABRAHAM MASLOW, 1908-1970



ABRAHAM MASLOW: “PEAK EXPERIENCES” AS A CAPACITY COMMON TO OUR SPECIES

Features

1. Universe as sublimely beautiful
2. Ordinary concerns fall away; ego-transcending, egoless
3. Being part of an integrated whole
4. Glimpse into a reality where evil is reconciled
5. Non-comparing acceptance of everything
6. Other people and things seen as intrinsically valuable
7. Feeling of being lucky, very fortunate, graced, gratitude
8. Responses of awe, wonder, reverence, humility, worship

BIG PEAKS AND LITTLE PEAKS

- No everything in this category is a “road to Damascus” experience
- Comes in big and small doses; once in a life-time, and everyday, routine experiences

PRACTICES OF SPIRITUAL AWARENESS AND ATTUNEMENT ARE VIRTUES

- Practices are efforts to be more aware of and in tune with what is experienced as most real
- This leads to a kind of happiness, knowing oneself and others in a profoundly different way
- How spiritual awareness and attunement lead to other virtues

EXAMPLES OF SPIRITUAL ATTUNEMENT PRACTICES

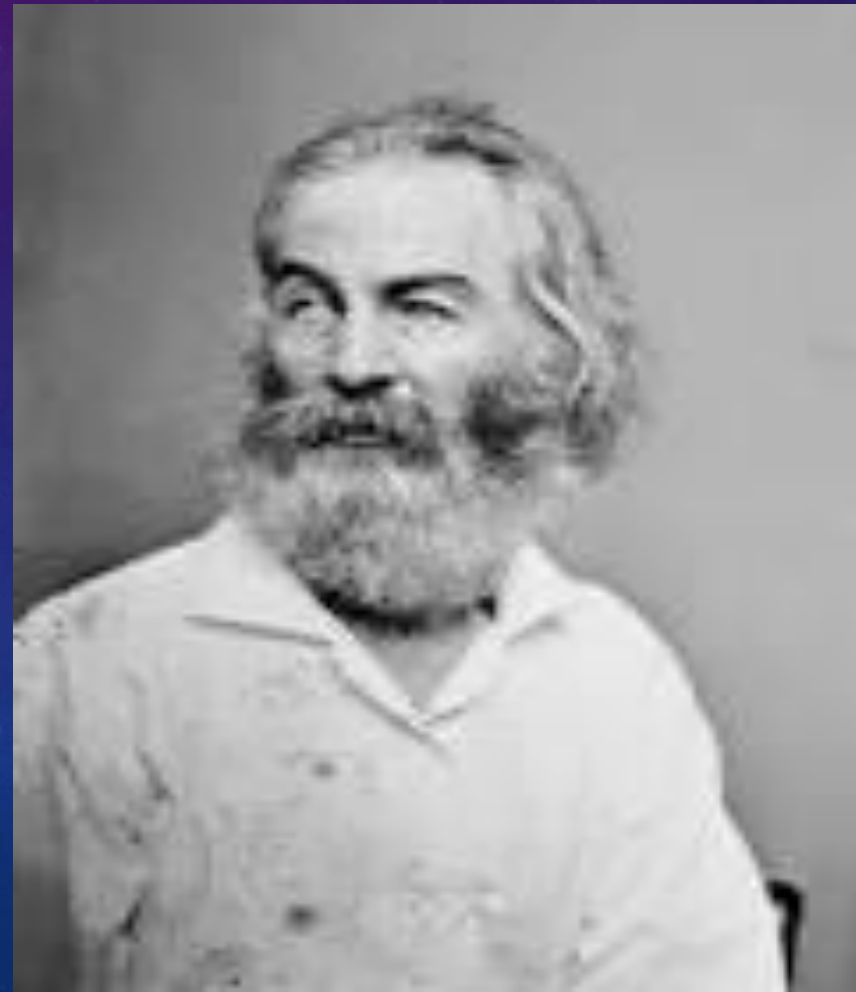
- Mindfulness
- Meditation (e.g., meditative walking, or eating)
- Prayer, Centering Prayer
- Inner practices of letting go, relinquishing ego concerns
- Fasting
- Retreats (e.g., from commercialism--buying nothing for a year; silence, especially in groups)
- Potentially anything. . .
- Spiritual practices help us “put up our sails”

SACRALIZATION OF THE EVERYDAY

WALTMAN WHITMAN, 1819-1892

LEAVES OF GRASS

- “Why should I wish to see God better than I do this day?
I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each moment then,
In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in the glass;
I find letters from God dropped in the street, and every one is signed by God’s name”



GABRIEL MARCEL (1889-1973)

PROBLEMS/MYSTERIES

- Problems admit to logic, to strategies for resolution. Problems don't rely on the problem-solver to give something of himself/herself to reach an answer.
- Mysteries do not admit to being solved; there is something of us in the mystery, they resist dispassionate analysis. Statements about mysteries are more poetic than analytic; mysteries must be lived with, lived through; we don't find solution to mysteries, we find discernment.
- Virtues are mysteries in this sense, who we are is always involved in understanding them; spiritual attunement is especially this way.

SPIRITUALITY OFTEN INVOLVES A MOVE FROM BELIEFS TO KNOWLEDGE

- Religious traditions are one form of spirituality, but can be an impediment, if they are dogmatic about beliefs
- Embracing pluralism: “One river, many wells”
- “Let us get rid of soul atomism” (Fredrich Nietzsche) -- belief in the soul as a metaphysical nugget deep inside each of us; this is relinquished along with other ego-driven ideas
- Knowledge that comes with spirituality is largely *apophatic*, can only be pointed to, or shown, not described. . .

JOHN KEATS (1795-1821) “VALE OF SOUL MAKING”

“Do you not see how necessary a world of pains and troubles is to school an intelligence and make it a soul?”

-- Letter to George & Georgiana Keats, 1819



A SPIRITUALITY PROFILE

1. What was I taught at home (my prehistory) about religion and/or spirituality?
2. What experiences would I name as having spiritual significance?
3. What practices do I use to keep me spiritually attuned?



HOPE, HOPEFULNESS

- Does hope need an object?
- The difference between *hoping for*, and *being hopeful*; being hopeful is a life posture that relinquishes specific outcomes.
- Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973)

THE PERSISTENCE OF HOPE

“Hope” is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul
And sings the tune without the words
And never stops - at all

--Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

HOPE IS NOT OPTIMISM

- **Optimism** – the U.S. “ideology”; a compulsive American exceptionalism
- “We can do anything.”
- Can spring from magical thinking; denial of limits
 - Terry Eagleton, *Hope without Optimism* (UVA Press, 2015)
- **Hope**--“open hope”; realism about the facts; yet openness to the idea that something good, as yet unknown or even unimagined, can emerge
- Springs from the human ability to overcome despair
 - Judith Andre, *Worldly Virtue* (Lexington, 2015)

A HOPE PROFILE

- What are your experiences of hope? What were you taught about hope as a child? What do you now think about hope?
- What practices nurture, refine and strengthen hope as a virtue?