What does Spirituality mean?

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For starters the etymology: The word stams from the Latin *spiritus* which means the act of breathing, of respiration, and in a deeper sense also the breath of life, and by implication life itself.[i] The term spirituality appeared in the late 14th century as Anglo-French *spiritualite*, with meanings grounded in the predominant belief system of the time: *divine substance, divine mind, God, extension of divine power to man*.

An internet search proffered, among others, the following definitions:

- *the quality of being concerned with the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things.* Oxford Languages
- *… means the thing that animates life. Spiritual can be used to talk about anything that goes beyond mere physical existence, from ghost spirits to* ***religious feelings****.* vocabulary.-com
- *Spirituality can be defined generally as an individual's search for ultimate or sacred meaning, and purpose in life. Additionally it can mean to seek out or search for personal growth, religious experience,* ***belief*** *in a supernatural realm or afterlife, or to make sense of one's own "inner dimension".* Wikipedia
- *Spirituality generally refers to the search for meaning and purpose in life, often involving a connection to something larger than oneself, which can be a higher power, nature, or a sense of community. It encompasses a person's* ***beliefs****, values, and experiences that guide their understanding of life's big questions. Spirituality is a broad concept that can be expressed through various practices, including religious observance, meditation, or simply engaging with the natural world.* Googe AI
- *Cognitive dissonance is not unique to religion or spirituality, but often occurs in the context of such* ***beliefs****.* psychologytoday.com[ii]

The rendering of some words in bold type above is my way to highlight that the most prominent definitions cite ‘beliefs’ and ‘religious feelings’ – and although ‘experience’ is sometimes mentioned, as is nature and the natural world, I didn’t find the word ‘knowledge’ on page one of the search results.

I do feel a bit uncomfortable starting out this book with ‘negative’ comments on the general understanding of the term ‘spirituality’. On the other hand it’s important to me to draw attention to the assumptions and mindsets prevalent behind many such terms, so

that we can reflect on that and move past them. So here's my stance on some of the assertions above:

- *being concerned with the human spirit or soul* – this hinges on the idea that humans (as opposed to all other beings?) have a spirit or soul, whatever that may be. Whether we do or not, and what they may be, is open to discussion, and all too often a question of assumption or belief.
- *the thing that animates life* – life will generally be understood to include all life forms, from Archaea ('archaic' single-cell organisms without a nucleus) right up to the great apes (including Homo Sapiens). Life has evolved; I see no reason to *assume* that it needs something to animate it. That said, see 'Local energy structures' in book one, and 'Con·Tcheks' death' in the companion book 'The Galactic Community'. In short: At death, the energy body decouples from the physical, leaving the physical body an inanimate husk. That's my experience and understanding; but I wouldn't neccessarily say that the energy body is primary and animates the physical; rather I think that they are two aspects of every organism, with different fates when they part.
- *search for ultimate or sacred meaning, and purpose in life* – again, look at the assumptions: Why should there be a 'sacred' meaning or purpose in life? Perhaps because we have an emotional need to believe that our lives have some meaning or purpose? I myself had a thirst to know the truth about our existence – but there's a difference between an unbiased quest for that truth and a search which assumes or hopes that there is a meaning or purpose to life.
- *not unique to religion or spirituality, but often occurs in the context of such beliefs* – in the endnotes I've linked the web page from Psychology Today from which this was taken. I find it one of the better offerings, with a number of observations which I can identify with. But then, in an unguarded moment, we're back to religion and spirituality being lumped together as beliefs.

I don't hold with beliefs, as I've already clearly laid out in book one. Believing means not knowing, it is a crutch which is a hinderance to coming to true knowledge. For my part, I know, from my own experience, that with an earnest pursuit of experience, and reflection about it, we can come to knowledge about a lot of life's big questions. And that some questions are currently beyond the scope of our experiential, rational and scientific possibilities.

> For me, spirituality means carving out your own path of both experience and reflection, without prejudice or presupposed answers, to come to knowledge and insight.

> Any such path, trodden long and earnestly enough, will lead to the certainty of universal interconnection and interdependence, and change your life radically.

i Etymology of ‘Spirit’: https://www.etymonline.com/word/spirit
ii Spirituality: https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/spirituality