

SPIRITUALITY

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From ancient times man has exhibited a spiritual need to communicate with other humans, both present and future.

On rethinking this statement, I was hard pressed to come up with a clear definition of spirituality.

Webster defines it as a sentient part of a person which is incorporeal; or as ecclesiastic, religious.

The American Heritage Dictionary explains it as having the nature of spirit, not tangible or material.

Abraham J. Heschel, (1907-1972), a renowned scholar and philosopher of the last century, has written extensively on this subject. He describes spirituality as a state of being that's beyond all interests and selfishness. It's an inner freedom that leads to a sense of transcendence, an awareness of surpassing all limits of knowledge and comprehension. As a rule, experiencing awe – gaining insight into a meaning greater than ourselves – precedes transcendence.

So, the sequence is: awe – transcendence – spirituality.

Although spirituality has no objective truth or absolute, we've all experienced awe when viewing a sublime event such as a Hubble photograph of a bursting nebula. Such an ineffable occasion, an indescribable grandeur, leaves an imprint of cosmic power and meaning on us that renders us speechless. To quote Heschel, "At the root of our thinking and feeling is the certainty that there is meaning in whatever exists."

Under such circumstances the strength of our human attributes of reason and passion cannot but connect us to the vastness of the universe, to the force of life, to the potency of eternity that pulsates through our veins. That is the spirituality we all are part of.

We have the capacity to connect to spirituality, if we allow ourselves to be open to it. But, as is true of all ephemeral human faculties, for them to function the will to do so must be exercised.

Many in various disciplines engage in spiritual activities every day. Artists, poets and writers have been directly involved in this endeavor from time immemorial. Given language's particular aptitude, we know that great fiction has the power to impart eternal truth, leaving an indelible mark on emerging young minds. What better way to neutralize the evil and mendacity stalking the world today than by directing the youth to serve the higher nature of mankind?