

# Sustainability & Spirituality

## Common Threads & Common Threats

### - Book Overview Draft -

PhD 2017, MBA, MA

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## Overview

### Sustainability & Spirituality

What does it take to move the human species into a sustainable mode of existence on planet Earth? This book suggests that the answers lie within the realm of spirituality and religion, and that the message across a wide variety of traditions is the same: look inside. Further, the author hypothesizes that without overt—not just covert—spirituality, sustainability is not sustainable; that is, without spirituality, the human project will fail.

Some who are drawn to this topic may not think of themselves as religious or spiritual people. But it is important to recognize that the sustainability movement is itself underpinned by core principles that originate in spiritual experience, as this study demonstrates.

### Common Threads

Oeness. Living simply. Purity. Care and heart. These principles resound in sustainability, yet arise from spiritual grounding. Awakening. Preservation of life. Awe and wonder. All seven are found in their most ecstatic, soul-moving expression in the living writings of mystics: mystics whose voices reach across cultures, language, and time, and touch our hearts and move us to compassionate action, even in our heavily distracted, technological age.

### Common Threats

Fracturedness. Compulsive consumption. Pollution. Antisocial tendencies. Sleep. Destruction of life. Apathy. These seven factors negatively impact sustainability, spirituality, and therefore, the world at large. While the “common threads” are generally seen as life-promoting, the contrary principles are easily identified as life-degrading.

However, systems thinking asks us to avoid dualistic paradigms. In that spirit this study examines the life-promoting aspects of, for example, fracturedness, and the life-degrading aspects of Oeness. There are abundant examples of instances in which seemingly virtuous principles devolve into demonic forces. And the opposing principles have their life-promoting roles to play.

### Mapping the Territory

Oeness, Living Simply, Purity, and Care and Heart are examined at length, while Awakening, Awe and Wonder, and Preservation of Life are covered more briefly.

Spiritual and religious traditions are grouped into five broad categories. While three of the categories consist of world religions (traditions of Indian origin, Abrahamic traditions, and East Asian traditions),

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indigenous traditions are key, and Gnosticism, alchemy and Hermeticism, and modern spiritual teachings are included. Sustainability is organized into three categories: ecological science, activism, and sustainable business.

### The Takeaway

This book is written with reacquaintance foremost. It's not a call back to any one religion, but to all teachings that in turn point back inside one's self. The author asks you to return home, to the mystical origins of your own faith, endorsing direct participation in the continued unfolding of the Spirit that moved the founders and mystics of your tradition; requesting that you reconnect with the essence of Life.

For those who do not have a relationship with a religion or spiritual tradition, fear not. Our spiritual inheritance is legion. Many ancient and modern teachings are included herein that walk seekers into union with the divine, with nature, and into the divine-in-nature.

And finally, many people *have* engaged with a spiritual path but feel they are not experiencing life to the fullest. This is the natural outcome of being immersed in a society that supposes a purely physical worldview, treating the metaphysical with suspicion. This book suggests that knocking the lid off the metaphysical box is what is needed, and many of the traditions included here facilitate this.

### Spirit, Science, & Experience

Readers may be pleasantly surprised to discover that spirituality has no quarrel with science, and vice versa. It is only when two extremist worldviews collide—materialistic reductionism and fundamentalist faiths—that this mental split occurs. Fundamentalism is always a reaction: this is true whether considering *scientism*, or fundamentalist components of religious faiths.

Direct experience of Spirit puts us in touch with Life, opens vision, and burns up internal obstacles. Humanity doesn't have the luxury of an easy reacquaintance with the gods, who have been ignored for only the most recent, tiny slice of the human timeline. *Nous* is now, and we're legally blind to it. Yet our libraries, temples, life forms, and spirits are bursting with the intelligence that we require. It is in the mystical sectors of our faiths and teachings that we find the leverage to open. It is in the mystical sectors that we find these seven principles writ large. Borrowing stories from sustainability, and epic beauty from the mystics, herein the reader discovers where, why, and even a little bit of *how*, to look.