

Spirituality and Politics

Because we live in a nation that values the separation of Church and State, and because the two topics that we don't discuss in polite company are religion and politics, we tend to think of the collective realm by which we make decisions [politics], and the more personal realm of how we understand ourselves in relation to the world [spirituality] as being quite separate. I have come to believe that our spirituality has a profound impact on how we make sense of the events that arise for us, including, and in many instances, especially with regard to events in the political realm.

In an effort to bridge the intense polarization we are experiencing in the political realms, not just in the US, but around the world, I want to try to parse out what some of those spiritual issues are and to suggest ways to begin to bridge the divide. To start with, here are the concepts and questions that I find to be central to what I mean as the spiritual dimensions of life which impact how we encounter the political issues of our day.

1. **Is something real?**
 - a. Is there something that is real?
 - b. is it possible to know what it is?
 - c. how do I come to know *what is real*?
2. **Can change be good?**
 - a. Is *that which is real* something that changes,
 - b. is change helpful, and
 - c. how do I stand in relationship to change?
3. **Am I Safe?**
 - a. Are others a source of danger,
 - b. how do I know, and
 - c. what might I do to protect myself?
4. **Who Can I Trust?**
 - a. What are the sources of authority in my life,
 - b. how do I know which authorities are valid or helpful, and
 - c. will I submit to them?
5. **Can I Know Good and Bad?**
 - a. Am I aware of my capacity to make harmful choices,
 - b. is the good or the evil that I or others do intrinsic to who or what we are, and
 - c. are such choices a construct of our lived experience [nature vs. nurture]?
6. **What is My Purpose?** [In the vastness of the cosmos, do I matter?]
 - a. Do I recognize my life as having purpose,
 - b. are there choices I can make to fulfill myself, and
 - c. how would I come to know what they are?
7. **Am I Responsible for Others?** [To what degree am I responsible?]
 - a. Do my choices impact the welfare of others,
 - b. do I have a responsibility to others, and
 - c. what might I do to best fulfill my obligations?
8. **What Must I Care For?** [What are the bounds of that for which I am responsible?]
 - a. Who or what am I responsible for,
 - b. what is the nature of that responsibility, and
 - c. what is the scope of that responsibility?

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