

# **A Space Beyond: Perspective on Various Spiritualities**

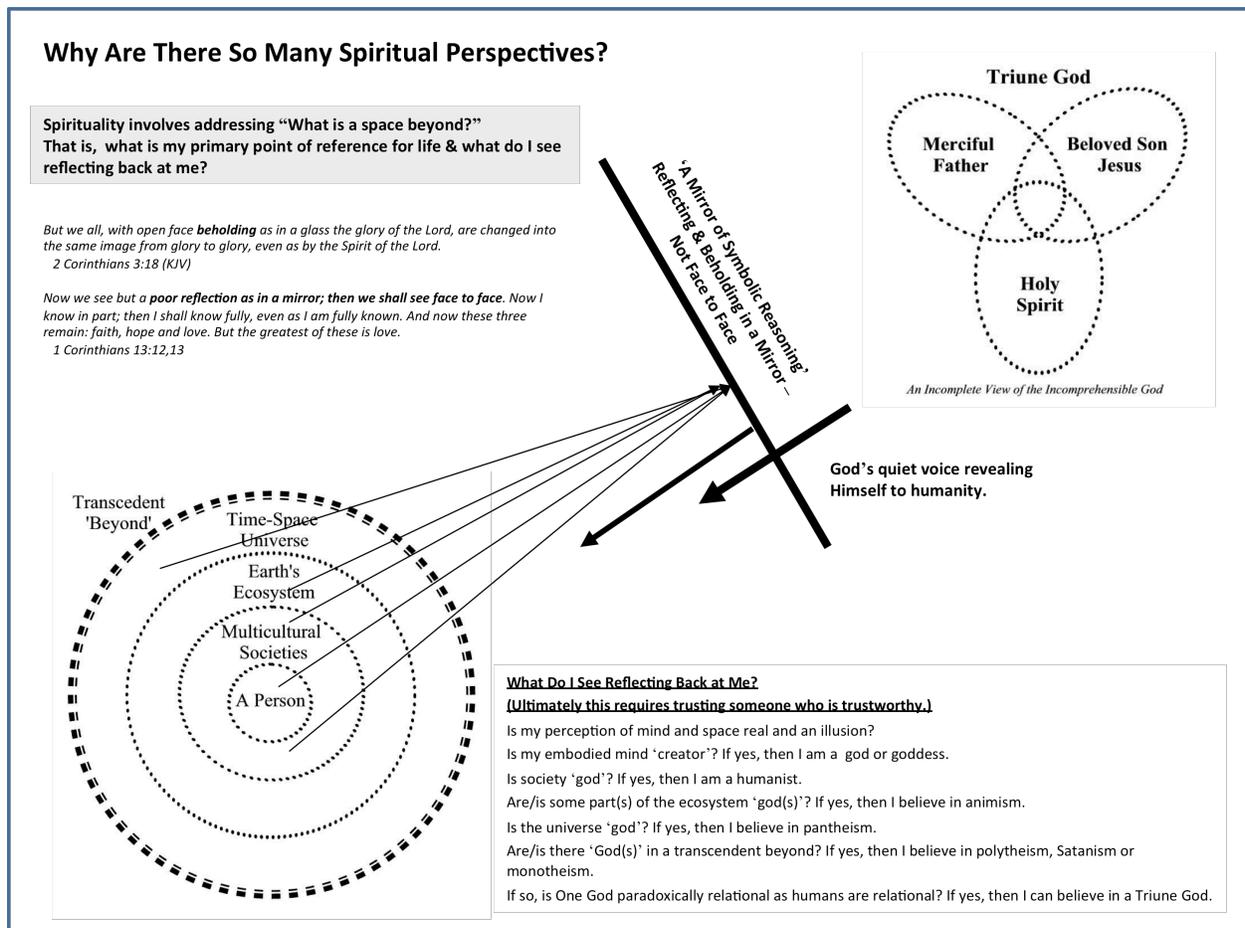


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In our global society, why are there so many different views of spirituality? How can reasonable people across the planet come to such different conclusions about spirituality? There are many ways to address this question, but one way is through the lens of “point of reference for considering a space beyond”. What is our primary point of reference beyond us for viewing our lives?

That reference point may shift as we grow and experience life. For instance, a newborn child’s point of reference may be the face of his or her mother. That will change as he/she grows into an adult. Another way of stating this pursuit is, ***“If I stepped outside myself and looked back, what would I conclude? Where would I step? Who lives in this beyond? What does this say about who I am?”***

All this may seem very confusing and philosophical. It is! The following chart illustrates various points of reference in addressing this issue of beyond. Across cultures, humanity has agreed a beyond exists or at least exists within the illusions of the mind. They just haven’t agreed upon what is beyond. However, the common agreement of a space beyond provides a basis for exploring various spiritualities.



If there is nothing beyond me, if my mind is ultimately all there is, then I may conclude that I am a **god or goddess**. If I conclude that even my mind is an **illusion** with beyond therefore an illusion, then all pursuit of life is a meaningless game including all spiritualities.

If my primary point of reference in life is society, if society is the dominant force that impacts my life, then I may believe there is no God or I doubt His existence or involvement in human affairs. I essentially believe in **humanism**.

If nature, the living ecosystem, is my point of reference beyond me, then **animism** may be my belief system. Objects and animal spiritualism may provide sources of inspiration and strength for me.

If the universe (or multiple universes) is all of beyond, then I may conclude that the universe is alive and is god. This **pantheist** belief allows me to function as a force within the broader life force of the universe. I may conclude I am a god or goddess. Or I may conclude that life is an accident generated by a godless universe.

If the universe was created, i.e. it didn't always exist and there is a transcendent beyond, then I can believe in good and bad gods (**polytheism** and/or **Satanism**) or in One God (**monotheism**). Most of the world's population believes in one or more gods. And the goodness of that or those gods has been debated.

There are many apologetics of the existence of One Good God including ...

- the first cause apologetic
- intelligent design of creation implies a design Creator
- human nature implies a Designer whose nature exceeds that of humankind
- the idea of God implies the existence of God
- the human need and desire for God implies satisfaction in a real God
- miracles attributed to God
- symbolic meanings that point to God (i.e. human love and jealous symbolically tell us of God's jealous love),
- spiritual experiences as evidence for God
- abstract ideas of beauty, goodness and perfection as from God
- power to change us implies God's work in our lives
- inability to disprove God implies God exists
- concepts of eternity and a transcendent beyond planted within human hearts and minds imply a God who is eternal and beyond creation.]

If humanity reflects the image of God and humans are relational beings, then I may believe in the paradox of the **Triune God, Who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit**. But in tension with this paradox is the possibility that humanity has simply created God in the perfected image of man.

With all the evidences we are still left with a trust decision. We will use our limited free will to explain a space beyond in some manner.

## **How can we know if space beyond is real or an illusion?**

That's a question some people ask and others don't. But for the ones who ask it, it's an important question to consider. Like knowing truth, when it comes to knowing what is real requires a degree of trust and considering our doubts. In a world that offers so much virtual reality, we are increasingly confronted with the question of reality. Are thoughts real? Are our senses more real than our thoughts? Are dreams more real than other types of consciousness? Is consciousness real? Is spirituality real? How can we decide?

One avenue to consider is probabilistic cause and effect. We make decisions with some sense of an imagined outcome. For instance, when you study a book you have some sense of an outcome. When you walk across a busy street, your outcome prediction governs your fear level. Imagined outcomes are formed through experience with outcomes of behavior. Over time we grow in our ability to discern outcomes but we can never predict the future with 100% accuracy—experience tells us that.

So how can we know what is real? Our God-given ability to feel pain and pleasure helps. Our ability to reason helps. Our ability to perceive when we transition from various levels of consciousness helps. But in the end we must choose to trust someone who we perceive to be trustworthy. That may be the Triune God, a person in authority, our culture or it may be ourselves alone. The choice of trust is ours.

The journey of spiritual transformation always requires trust. The Triune God has built a trust system. Though we can't eliminate all doubt as we look to space beyond, we can choose to trust "someone" who is trustworthy. God always calls us to choose to trust. If we seemingly refuse to trust God, our suspicions reveal our trust in ourselves. Spirituality is relational and thus is a question of who is trustworthy to trust. Though much reasoning can be given for any spirituality, ultimately God has wired humanity to engage in trust with our hearts, minds, bodies and souls.

Obviously, the above is a brushstroke. The philosophical intricacies of addressing the issue of a "point of reference for considering a space beyond" can be complex (including the problem of meaning in language, i.e. how can I know if I know anything). However, the above is intended to serve as a perspective of how reasonable people can form such different spiritual perspectives.

This journey into cognitive perspectives may not be where you are today. You may have concluded that part of your journey, or it may be in front of you. However, we often associate with people who don't trust as we trust or doubt as we doubt. Our prayer is that this epilogue can serve both as a bridge for discussion and perspectives for extending the love of Jesus to those whose perspectives are different from ours. And that in time they will behold the Triune God Who is *"the great God, the great King above all gods"* (Psalm 95:3 NIV).

We may ignore, but we can nowhere evade, the presence of God.  
The world is crowded with Him. He walks everywhere *incognito*.

C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm*