

Spirituality?

by Graeme Urlich

This question came through to me from one of our teachers in Germany today.

“I came across the question what "spirituality" means and "spiritual" in huna terms and am looking for explanations of it in connection with topics of life, nature and healing, for instance spiritual resistance, what it is and what problems it causes.”

This is a huge topic but I will do my best to try to outline a *Huna* viewpoint here and provide links to some other articles that may be relevant. The two books *Urban Shaman* and *Kahuna Healing* cover some of this and this article is more a rambling exploration of my own thinking on the topic than an exhaustive study of the ideas. Maybe it is close, maybe it needs more thought but it is important I think, to distinguish between *Huna*, the philosophy, and *Kalakupua*, the shaman tradition based upon it. We shorten *Kalakupua* to *Kupua* when referring to a practitioner. This then is this *Kupua's* viewpoint.

This can be a tricky question to answer since people from different backgrounds may have quite different definitions for these words. Soul for instance, is often talked about as being susceptible to being fractured, often with dire consequences. A Christian pastor once said that if you replace the word soul in the bible with “conscious mind” it begins to make a whole lot more sense.

I am re-reading *Kahuna Healing* chapter-by-chapter and discussing it with some of the *Alakai* at the moment. I am astounded by the depth of knowledge I am getting from it now that I didn't see in the numerous times I have read it over the past thirty plus years. As this knowledge becomes embodied through practice, it grows and we see it more easily all around us. To some extent, trying to understand it on an intellectual level is less important than recognising that it works and learning how to use it for benefit.

Trying to condense a concept with a wide ranging scope down to a single word in one language isn't really possible. Trying to translate from one language to another and one culture to another is even more difficult. I wonder if perhaps “spirituality” could maybe be described as “living lucidly” on a practical level.

There's a recent idea called spiritual bypassing where events in life are passed off as having some “spiritual significance” in that there must be a lesson to learn from it or some such thing. In *Huna* terms anything that happens is an experience and it is up to us to decide if it has meaning,

or to give it meaning if it is useful to do so. On a practical level though, if you broke your arm would you sit there wondering what the lesson was or would you go get it treated?

One of my *Kahuna* teachers, Abraham Kawaii, used to say “*Kahuna* training is in a greater knowledge of yourself.” He told a story about being asked to look into a small pool during his training, and that he would see his destiny there. After some time he said, he realised what he could see was his own reflection. Another master teacher of *Huna* knowledge, Serge Kahili King, pointed out once that the way the word “spiritual” is used in the bible, it really means awareness.

The Hawaiian view of the world was quite different from the Western ideas of different dimensions as being separate places with “veils” between them that we have to penetrate in order to be able to experience them. Some think these are in a “spiritual” hierarchy and our task in the physical is to transcend them one-by-one. From that, we get the idea of portals that open and close at certain times depending on astrology and such things. Used appropriately these ideas can be useful but I have encountered some who suffer extreme symptoms of excess tension, a kind of separation anxiety, because they believe themselves to be imprisoned here for some reason, away from their real home.

The Hawaiian shaman sees no hierarchy in the universe. He need only shift his attention to another place where he already is in order to experience a different “dimension”. We think of it like all of the TV and radio signals that are in the air all around us, all of the time. To listen to or watch something different, we need only change the channel. While we are here though, we may as well make the best of it we can in the most enjoyable way we know how.

Hawaiians distinguished between what they could see, *ao*, and what they could not see, *po*. In this framework the wind is in *po* because we cannot see it, we can only see the effects of it. The sun goes into *po* when it sets.

An analogy we can use is the car. Most adults in the modern world can drive a car but most have very little idea of how they work. Most notice when it starts to make an odd noise and to take it for a service when the car tells them to or when the book recommends it.

The master mechanic on the other hand, has taken the time and effort to learn about the vehicles he is charged with maintaining. He is therefore equipped to know the best oils to use, what parts need replacing regularly and which last longer. Over time he learns the different sounds of the cars and ailments that might be a sign of and how to remedy them. In old Hawaii, he would be the *Kahuna* mechanic because he is “*aware*” of the inner workings of what he is working with and how to work with that knowledge.

Surfing was a popular past time in old Hawaii. Many knew how to catch a wave and ride it to where it was going. The *Kahuna he'e nalu* though, not only knew how to catch the waves, he knew how to read the waves and catch one that would take him to where he wanted to go. Some have said he could call such a wave when he wanted it. Beyond that, he knew how to pick the trees that would make the best boards and how to work with it to bring that to life out of the wood.

I am not sure about the idea of spiritual resistance. Perhaps that might come from a feeling of not belonging anywhere but any resistance is felt as tension in the physical body. We would work with that behaviour and any ideas around it to relieve it. Relieving tension always allows our natural abilities to work more freely so we see beyond the visible world. Many don't know how to interpret or work with that. Fear is likely to cause people to shut down that perception and the only tool *Ku*, the body mind, has to do that, is tension.

Ike. *The world is what you think it is.* This means that we are creating our experience of this physical reality through our thoughts, beliefs, fears, biases, attitudes and behaviours. If we change our rules about life, and about ourselves, our experience changes. Seeing spirituality as an ideal we "should" be striving for causes a great deal of tension. Thinking of it as being the world we live in and all around us relieves a lot of tension and allows us to be more aware of who we are and our place in the world.

Kala. *There are no limits.* This is the understanding that everything is connected to everything else. We are not separate from anything anywhere. Our perception of separateness can be a useful illusion for certain activities but if we lose sight of that being a perception, we can become very limited in our thinking.

Makia. *Energy flows where attention goes.* The more we put our attention on the certainty that the "spiritual world" is something to attain from the physical reality, the more we create tension and obstacles to our awareness of the greater parts of ourselves beyond the conscious mind and the physical body. The more we open our minds up and put our attention on to what is happening around us, the more we open up to greater awareness.

Manawa. *Now is the moment of power.* The more we can bring our attention to here and now, the more aware we can be in a way that allows us to really see things more clearly, make constructive decisions about it and choose effective responses and actions based on that awareness.

Aloha. *To love is to be happy with.* As always, in *huna* we are looking to increase love and spread joy. The more we are aware of our reactions to things around us the better able we are to

respond with peace and healing, with compassion and the more aware we are of the peace and joy that there is in the world.

Mana. All power comes from within. The power to choose and make use of the principles above comes from within us. We do not need anyone's permission to feel better or be aware of anything. No knowledge or wisdom is kept from us. It is in the essence of being.

Pono. Effectiveness is the measure of truth. We know the wind by its effects. We know the effectiveness of our thoughts and beliefs by the results we see in our experience of life. Developing the skill of observing without judgement is a very effective way to begin create better and better results. The transition may not be easy but it is effective. Once there, or even just on the way, we can begin to help others and, as the saying goes "The more the merrier."

The meanings of the principles above are very brief definitions relevant to the question. As I am still finding out, the more you contemplate and use the principles, the more knowledge, the more "spirituality", you find in them. They don't require you to give up any ways of thinking but they can always help make what you use now work better for you.

Kahuna training then, really is training in the greater knowledge of yourself. Perhaps becoming more "spiritual" is in developing a greater knowledge of yourself also.

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