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# SPIRITUAL ESCAPISM



LIVE IN REALITY

KURT GASSNER



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BY  
KURT GASSNER



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Spiritual Escapism  
Kurt Gassner



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Our society's need for escapism has always interested me.

David Lloyd



## **DEDICATED TO**

My XXXXXXXX, who is obviously a victim of spiritual escapism. She avoids, evades, and deflects parts of herself through spirituality, using it as a bandage to cover up the wounds underneath which hadn't been dealt with.



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## Foreword



**S**piritual Escapism is a subject that is very close to my heart for two reasons. First, I am myself a part of the effort to realize people what spiritual escapism is. Being a certified hypnotherapist, I am fully aware and qualified to understand the issue and the miseries it has brought to many people. Secondly, I am very touched to pick my pen for this subject because of my very beloved sister, a victim of spiritual escapism, and it is very hurtful to see her being isolated from the world.

Spiritualism has taken the world for centuries now. There are positives of spiritualism. No doubt about that, but the negativities that have taken over the spiritual practices are also alarming. People have resorted to an escape path in the form of spirituality but actually getting into more miseries, which we today know as spiritual escapism.

Getting positivity back, making yourself relaxed, having a good connection with nature, and enhancing your mood were some of the goods. However, with the changing world, spiritualism adopted practices that made people grow an idea that there is nothing much important in life. It induced the characteristic of avoidance and irresponsibility, in broad, resultantly getting

people isolated and demotivated to get up and face and work for their problems. Fakes in spirituality are again a big negativity, and we know the consequences.

To lay off the actions, lack of will to improve, and avoidance of work for the betterment have come up as some of the ills. The negative aspects of spiritual escapism highly affect a person's physical and mental health. I have discussed the subject in much detail in the preceding chapters.

On the other hand, there are scientifically proven practices and methods that can help people get over the issues and problems in their lives. Hypnosis and hypnotherapy are examples. Time-proven techniques have shown very positive and encouraging results with much less time and effort, with the help of the certified specialists, helping people overcome anxiety, depression, and all related aspects of life. This does not require the victim to take on all those pains and miseries on the path of spirituality, and with a very dedicated and focused approach, they are helped to find the solution, get out of isolation, and be prepared to take on their responsibilities and overcome their inner fears. The subject again has been discussed in length for the readers' understanding.

As a qualified hypnotherapist, I have put in all my efforts to understand the concept of spirituality as well. I am not against spiritualism, but I am certainly against spiritual escapism. Spiritualism, if adopted positively, can serve a person. Though it takes much longer time and effort, however, adopting spirituality to give away effort and to close one's eyes from realities are not at all supported, as it would turn a person into

a useless human who is not ready to accept his part of the work and is always avoiding, behind the curtain of spirituality.

After reading this book, I hope that we are all able to help people around us who are victims of spiritual escapism.

Very happy reading to all of you.

***Kurt Friedrich Gassner***

# *Spiritual Escapism*



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# *Spiritualism*



The basic definition of spiritualism is to believe that the spirits of the dead exist and humans can interact with them and can benefit from them. The Spirit World is a place assumed by the spiritualists where the spirits evolve and continue to evolve. Spiritualism basically works on three principles. One that the contact with the spirits is possible, two, spirits are more advanced than humans, and thirdly, they can provide useful information and help humans learn even about the nature of God. Another concept that evolves out of all this is the Spirit Guide. Spiritualists believe that specific spirits can guide humans to attain spirituality and provide guidance for that. Another term that is normally used to contact spirits is the medium. Normally a person is believed to have the ability to contact the spirits directly. It is believed that some mediums work while in a trance-like state, and some are claimed to be the catalyst for various paranormal physical phenomena through which the spirits announce their presence.

## **PHILOSOPHY**

Spiritualism is comparatively a very new religion that gives an understanding of God and demands followers to adopt a high sense of duty towards fellow human beings. It basically works

on spiritual growth and prepares the followers for eternal existence.

It is also a science as it is based on facts that are proven and demonstrated over time. It reassures the search for truth in existence, nature, and psychology.

Spiritualism can also be classified as a philosophy that tries to understand people physically, morally, intellectually, and spiritually. Spiritualists believe that the spirit is the force moving the universe, and the philosophy of spiritualism covers the whole territory of nature.

Philosophically, spiritualism is the concept common to a wide range of thought believing that in addition to physical and tangible realities of the world, there are realities that are not observed by the human senses, to include a personal God, the ever-living soul, and brain, and the cosmic forces beyond the reach of materialistic and worldly explanations. May it be dualism, monism, atheism, theism, pantheism, idealism, or any other, it is compatible with spiritualism as long as it has contentment and acceptance of the realities beyond materialism. We can say that Theism is a dualist spiritualist philosophy and pantheism can be example of monist spiritualism.

Spiritualism stands basically on four pillars that provide the basis for the followers to build a better pathway and be a better person, namely healing, peace, respect, and evolution. In spiritualism, healing is not just taken as a restoration of physical health rather is taken as a universal cure provided by the spirit source, which, if used positively, can be a source of healing for body, mind, and the spirit. This is the best and definitive use of Spirit in Action and can be used for others as well as for

self-healing. In spiritualism, Peace is not just the end of war. Personal serenity and mental peacefulness create openness and are a source to swap conflict with joy and happiness. It is the application of mental forces to attain peace within self and for all others around the world. When we talk about respect in spirituality, it does not mean just abstaining from worthless behavior or rather believe that is is a very positive attitude to all. It is the consideration for people through courtesy, love, and good communication to generate good feelings, understanding, and goodwill for the soul. This very pillar, that is respect, can just change the meaning and look of life for the present and future. And finally, evolution. Evolution in spirituality is taken as growth, survival, and further development of the basic ideas. It advocates constructive actions, moving with focus, and reach the level of the real growth of mind and body.

## **HISTORICAL PROSPECTIVE**

Spiritualism has its root deep in history, but it all started in a more regularized way in the nineteenth century. As a new religious movement now known as modern Spiritualism got started in New York in 1848. Margaret and Kate Fox, normally known as the Fox Sisters, became internationally famous after claiming they could get in touch with people beyond the grave. At the start, the work of Fox Sisters as a medium to contact the dead was taken as



entertainment, but for others, it almost became a religion and is still practiced in a few communities.

It all began with a series of apparently supernatural events at a farmhouse in Hydesville, New York, in 1848 where the occupants of the house and the previous occupants experienced some unexplained raps and movements at night. One night, after a strong disturbance, Kate Fox, the younger daughter of the house owner, is said to have successfully challenged the spirit to repeat in raps the number of times she flipped her fingers. Once they communicated successfully, a code was agreed upon by which the raps given could answer questions, and the spirit was said to have identified himself as a man who had been murdered in the house.

This practice of having a sitting to communicate with spirits spread widely and rapidly from that time. In the 1860s it was very popular, particularly in England and France. Kate Fox, later known as Mrs. Fox Jencken along with her sister Maggie Fox, devoted much of their time acting as the mediums to contact spirits in the United States and England. Other mediums like table turning, in which participants placed their hands on the table and would wait for its vibration and rotation, were introduced. These practices were very popular in those times.



*Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772)*

This unconventional and new movement, naturally had opposition. Those oppositions were not merely verbal, rather mobs were turning against such practices. The Church associated spiritualism with the witchcraft.

For half a century, Spiritualism did spread but with no formal organization. It was attaining cohesion through periodical tours by trance lecturers, camp meetings, and accomplished mediums' activities. Most of the spiritualists were women, and the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) and the teachings of Franz Mesmer (1734–1815) were reopened by those seeking direct knowledge of the afterlife. Emanuel Swedenborg is claimed to be the father of spiritualism. Swedenborg was a very highly regarded inventor and scientist who achieved many engineering innovations and was also in physiology and anatomy. In 1741, he had a series of mystical experiences, dreams, and visions and claimed that he had a connection with God to reform Christianity. He also claimed to communicate with spirits and described the structure of the spirit world. His studies defined that there is not a single Hell or Heaven rather there is a series of higher and lower heavens and hells. Also, the spirits are the connections between God and humans, and God uses them to communicate with humans. Though Swedenborg did not support seeking spirit contact, his work did inspire many who desired to do so.

Mesmer, on the other hand, did not contribute much towards the religious beliefs. He was the founder of a technique that today we know as hypnotism. He claimed he could induce trances and cause the subjects to contact supernatural beings. There was a wonderful deal of professional showmanship inherent to demonstrations of Mesmerism, and the practitioners in mid-19th-century in North America entertained their audiences to have demonstrated the methods for contact with the divine.



*Franz Mesmer*  
(1734–1815)

Andrew Jackson was the man who combined Swedenborg and Mesmer and called his system the “Hormonal philosophy”. Davis was a practicing faith healer, a Mesmerist from New

York. The socialist theories of Fourier’s strongly influenced him. His famous book, *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations, and a Voice to Mankind*, written in 1847, became very popular.

In the early days of modern spiritualism, spiritualist gatherings were concerned with demonstrating and investigating messages from spirits. These messages were examined to build theoretical constructs for explaining how spirit contact could occur. Séances featuring more spectacular physical phenomena were conducted, and mediums specialized in such displays. Spirits were said to have the power to raise or throw objects, speak independently without a medium, and leave pictures on photographic plates.

Spiritualism got to its peak growth in membership from the 1840s to the 1920s, especially in English-speaking countries. In the 1880s the credibility of the informal movement had weakened due to accusations of fraud perpetrated by mediums, and formal spiritualist organizations began to appear. Inherently religious movements avoided organizing as a church. Spiritualist associations began to appear in some areas of the United States after the Civil War and formed a nationwide organization, the National Spiritualist Association,

in 1893. This organization was later known as the National Spiritualist Association of Churches. By 1897, spiritualism was said to have more than eight million followers in the United States and Europe. Some churches announced the practices of the spiritualists as part of the forbidden activity of necromancy. In 1898, the Holy Office of the Roman Catholic Church condemned spiritualistic activities but approved a scientific investigation of the phenomena. Both Protestant and Catholic churches released anti-spiritualist literature.

Spiritualism was organized in small groups for spirit communication. Larger gatherings were held for public demonstrations of spirit contact. These gatherings evolved into the Sunday church services that became common in spiritualist churches in the 20th century. Many associations also sponsored camps where believers could congregate in a leisurely atmosphere and have private sessions with mediums.

Although spiritualist practices have been motivated by mere curiosity and fascination with the supernatural, they have also been driven by more serious concerns about the fate of the human soul. For those who have lost their faith in traditional Christianity, spiritualists have offered a new religion based not on an ancient tradition but on facts that anyone can apparently observe. Those for whom materialistic ways of thinking have precluded belief in a life after death have been given new hope of immortality. Those suffering from grief after the death of loved ones have been offered the possibility of communicating with them. The strong involvement of emotion in both the acceptance and the rejection of spiritualism has made it difficult to appraise the evidence for and against it.

# *Basics of Spiritualism*



**L**ike all other subjects of the world, spiritualism is based on certain beliefs, principles, tenets, and practices. The centuries-old system has been polished over time. Let us start with the basics of spiritualism.

## **BASIC BELIEFS**

Spiritualists generally believe in the following:

- Souls survive bodily death and live in a spirit world.
- Every human soul survives the body's death and enters a spirit world that surrounds and interpenetrates the material world.
- Souls can communicate with the material world
- Communication is possible between the material world and the spirit world under the right conditions, usually through a medium.
- Spirits are not much different from their earlier selves. They are much the same as they were in the material world, but without any physical deficiencies.

- Spirits are interested in people in the material world
- Spirit world is aware of and interested in the lives of those they have temporarily left behind.
- Communication from the Spirit world shows that life continues after physical death, and that human beings in the Spirit-world remain morally responsible for good and bad deeds committed in the material world.
- They believe that growing awareness that even death does not free a person from the consequences of their bad acts will lead people to behave better in this present life.
- They also believe that the information received from the spirit world should be sufficient to remove the fear of death.

## **BASIC PRINCIPLES**

### **Declaration of Principles (Spiritualists' National Union)**

The SNU declaration of principles provides a good basis to explain the Spiritualist view of the world.

### **THE GOD**

- The creative force in the universe is what Spiritualists know as God.
- That force created life in the beginning and still does so today.
- Spiritualists acknowledge God as their Father because they are part of the Life created by God.

## **THE HUMAN**

- All human beings are members of one divine family because they spring from the same creative force.
- Each person should understand the needs of other individuals in order to assist them.
- Spiritualists must look to the material necessities of their fellow creatures and their spiritual needs.

## **THE COMMUNICATION**

- All religions believe in life after death, but only Spiritualism shows that it is true by showing that communication with departed spirits actually occurs.
- Spiritualist Churches provide one of the venues where communication, through mediumship, is possible.
- Many physically deceased relatives and friends take advantage of this opportunity to continue to take an interest in the welfare of the living.

## **THE SPIRIT**

- Matter cannot be destroyed; it merely changes its form. As part of the Creative Force, Spirit is, therefore, indestructible.
- On the death of the physical body, the spirit continues as an integral part of the spiritual world.
- The spiritual world interpenetrates this material world but in a different dimension.

- In spirit life, we have a spirit body, which is a replica of our earthly body until we progress far enough.
- Individuals in the spirit world remain the same individuals with the same personalities and characteristics.
- Individuals in the spirit world only progress through their own efforts.
- Individual personal responsibilities do not stop at death.

### **RESPONSIBILITY**

- Each individual is responsible for their wrongful thoughts and deeds.
- No other person, or outside influence can interfere with an individual's spiritual development, unless they allow them to.

### **HERE AFTER**

- As you sow, so shall you reap
- The compensatory or retributive effects of this law operate now. They do not wait until life in the Spirit World.

### **ETERNAL PROGRESS**

- Every human spirit has the power to progress in wisdom and love.
- The rate of progress is directly proportional to the desire for mental and spiritual understanding.
- Each spirit always has the opportunity to reform and deal with the wrong things it has done in the past.

**The National Association of Spiritualist Churches** in the USA has nine principles that provide more information about Spiritualist beliefs:

- We believe in Infinite Intelligence.
- We believe that the phenomena of Nature, both physical and spiritual, are the expression of Infinite intelligence.
- We affirm that a correct understanding of such expression and living in accordance therewith, constitute true religion.
- We affirm that the existence and personal identity of the individual continue after the change called death.
- We affirm that communication with the so-called dead is a fact, scientifically proven by the phenomena of Spiritualism.
- We believe that the highest morality is contained in the Golden Rule: 'Whatsoever ye would that others should do unto you do ye also unto them.'
- We affirm the individual's moral responsibility, and that we make our own happiness or unhappiness as we obey or disobey Nature's physical and spiritual laws.
- We affirm that the doorway to reformation is never closed against any human soul here or hereafter.
- We affirm that the precepts of Prophecy and Healing contained in all sacred texts are Divine attributes proven through Mediumship.

## IS SPIRITUALISM A RELIGION?

Spiritualists sometimes refer to Spiritualism as a Religion, a Philosophy, and a Science. They regard their religion as based on universal truths:

*“Spiritualism is a common sense religion, one of knowing and living. We accept all truths and endeavor to prove their validity. Truths are found in nature, in other religions, in writings, in science, in philosophy, in Divine Law and are received through spirit communication.”*

National Association of Spiritualist Churches of the USA

Spiritualism is different from the world’s major and minor religions like Christianity, Judaism and Islam etc, because it’s recent, it doesn’t have a global presence, and it doesn’t have a body of theology. It’s a movement with rituals, doctrinal components, a belief in a transcendent realm, and it has an experiential dimension, elements that many other religions also have.

Modern Spiritualism sees itself as entirely rational, with no supernatural element. For Spiritualists, this distinguishes their beliefs from the concept of life after death found in many other faiths.

Many Spiritualists teach that Spiritualism is based on natural, scientific laws and does not involve the supernatural. They say that difference between their faith and other religions is that most religions are based on belief while Spiritualism is based on demonstrated evidence that there is life after death.

## **TYPES AND PRACTICES**

As the spiritualists claim, spirituality is the place within yourself where your soul can find a sense of peace. The concept is liberated from any rules, institutions, or hierarchy dedicated to the human soul. It is a personal experience creating personal beliefs while searching for the meaning of life. It stands for something greater in life than the physical or material world.

Being spiritual can have different meanings for different people. Spirituality can be related to religion and can be a non-religious experience such as connecting with nature, art, yoga, meditation, etc. Different experiences give different types of spirituality and practices.

### **MYSTICAL SPIRITUALITY**

This type is focused on the intuitional part of the soul. Those who have mystical spirituality believe that there's a greater unity to every experience in life and that experiences can go beyond the physical world, bringing everything into one greater unity. People with this type support the idea that everything happens for a reason. There's a greater explanation behind everything, and that would be the basis of what unites all the different experiences.

### **AUTHORITARIAN SPIRITUALITY**

Believing in a hierarchy of structure or authority is Authoritarian spirituality. Here, the followers follow the set of rules with some restrictions. This type of spirituality is related to religious beliefs, and not following the rules can cause conflicts. Followers of Authoritarian spirituality form a fundamentalist

religion, believing that their religion is the most truthful one. They would just exclude every other religion and can be the cause for radical religious terrorism.

### **INTELLECTUAL SPIRITUALITY**

This is the spirituality of knowledge. Intellectually spiritual people are after gaining knowledge of spiritual theories and analyzing the information they get from that knowledge. Prone to acquiring knowledge of spiritual theories. One form of this spiritual journey is studying theology. This type of spirituality is not solely related to studying religion. Any knowledge that helps people ***improve their spirituality*** is a form of intellectual spirituality.

### **SERVICE SPIRITUALITY**

The most common type of spirituality is because *people experience spiritual peace when they serve others*. The core aspect of it is helping others without expecting anything in return. Doing something that will benefit someone without getting something back. It is a common way for people to connect with their spiritual selves.

### **SOCIAL SPIRITUALITY**

Spiritual awakening when other people surround you explains this type of spirituality. Many people practice this when searching for a greater spiritual purpose. Being in religious groups is one way to experience this spirituality, but this can be achieved by exercising in a group, nature-related activities, meditation, etc.

### **WAYS OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICES**

Since there are multiple types of spirituality, there are also various ways of spiritual practices too. These are the ways spiritualists try to find a true spiritual self.

## KNOWLEDGE

The main idea behind this practice is the power knowledge gives to people. This practice revolves around the idea that ultimate liberation can happen with acquiring knowledge. This is not only about learning new things about the world but, most importantly, knowledge about yourself. Self- reflection, who you are, why you do things the way you do are the main principles of this spiritual practice. To achieve this, people use methods like *studying, meditation*, and contemplation. Some of the most famous approaches are Buddhism, Jnana Yoga, and Kabbalah.

## DEVOTION

This spiritual practice has *liberation from your ego as its core element*. This is partly because many people who consider themselves religious will use some of these methods to express their spirituality.

However, this is not always related with religion. People also devote themselves to a higher power source or their consciousness to experience spiritual freedom.

Some of those methods are chanting, praying, mantras, and belief to become more spiritually aware.

## MEDITATION

This is one of the most common methods people use to get better in touch with their true spirit. Alongside meditation are breathing techniques, asceticism, and teacher relationship.

The basis of this spiritual practice is calmness. People believe that whatever they accumulate through their life can

be channeled through these methods. This way, dealing with everyday life challenges becomes easier because there's a way to let go of negative thoughts.

## **SERVICE**

Like the service type of spirituality, this spiritual practice is about active selflessness. *The ultimate liberation can happen when helping and expecting nothing in return.*

This spiritual practice is about active selflessness, similar to the service type of spirituality. These people are liberated from any rules and rely only on giving rather than receiving. For them, this is the only way to redeem themselves from any challenge or negative situation in life. Volunteering, helping in Red Cross, helping those in need, working with people or children with disabilities, any type of selfless act falls under this category.

## **ENERGY**

More than a combination of different methods and core elements, this practice revolves around the idea of purification of your body and mind. There are all kinds of methods, such as meditation, breathing, somatic techniques, and teacher relationship. A person can achieve spiritual guidance in this practice in many ways. Some people use ritual behavior or activity to achieve this, others may concentrate solely on improving their physical health. Whatever the action, the goal is to purify both the body and mind, liberating it from the toxic elements you encounter in everyday life. Dealing with everyday challenges becomes easier once you'll have a proven spiritual method to free yourself from toxins.

## **WHY PEOPLE ADOPT SPIRITUALITY**

There can be many reasons why people adopt spirituality. Few are narrated below:

### **TO ESCAPE FROM REALITY**

Generally, people fall for spirituality to escape from the realities of life. People are not strong enough to face the problems and choose a simpler way to get away from them. This is simple escapism and shows the weakness of personality.

### **TO SATISFY THEIR EGO**

When the ego is not satisfied with what one has or does not have, people do not realize that ego is a myth. Ego is all about searching, running here and there with no output. People don't understand that only the SELF is the reality. Once that is realized, there is no materialism or spirituality.

### **CURIOSITY**

Often people get into spirituality out of their curious and demanding minds. The myths related to spirituality attract them to become or get some super natural traits.

### **POVERTY AND SUFFERINGS**

Poverty and sufferings are again out of the prime reasons why people adopt spirituality.

### **TO FIND A PURPOSE**

Sometimes people don't have a purpose in life, or due to some incident, they feel disconnected with the world. When the ego is unsatisfied with what it has or what it is and does not realize that ego is a myth, it keeps searching, running here and there.

Spirituality is one such thing in the searching of the ego until it realizes that the ego is a myth and the SELF is the only real. Once that is realized, there is no materialism or spirituality. There is only ONE REALITY. Mostly only those poor, curious, suffering, or in search of GOD, worshippers, and theists adopt spirituality and give importance in life.

Spirituality can be adopted anytime. We all are spiritual usually, it is after a break - something significant that changes one's mind and thinking. It can be a good or bad situation. Basically, that is the realization of the illusion.

When they are not satisfied with the pleasures of life or getting rammed in with troubles in life, people tend to adopt spirituality as a medium to overcome any sort of mental stress or pressure and pain from materialistic matters. They give more importance to spiritual needs than materialistic needs, for that matter.

There are several different reasons why people may turn to spirituality, including but not limited to:

Exploring spirituality can help people find answers to questions they have about philosophical questions such as “what is the meaning of life?” and “what purpose does my life serve?” Life can be full of ups and downs, good times and bad. Many people see spirituality as a great way of seeking comfort and peace in their life. It can often be practiced alongside things like yoga, which ultimately focuses on stress relief and release of emotion.