

The Spirituality Of Humanness

BY JEFF BROWN

The healthy shift towards inclusivity – socially, culturally, politically – must also infiltrate our notions of “spirituality” if it is going to bring us together as a humanity.

That is, we must get away from the idea that our spirituality and our humanness are two different realms, one higher or more meaningful than the other. In the way that it has been characterized since time immemorial – and not only by mystics, saints, and cave-dwellers – “spirituality” has been seen as a way of being that is above and beyond our “faulty” humanness, and certainly from many of the messy and unpleasant aspects of our life experience.

It has meant perpetual positivity. It has meant superficial affirmations. It has meant a pure, or absolute consciousness bereft of feeling. It has meant the transcending of the self. It has meant repressed anger and premature forgiveness. It has meant the dissing of ego. It has meant “emotions as illusion”. It has meant the bashing of our personal stories and legitimate victimhood. It has meant seeing God only when the sun is out.

Only in those rare moments when you can “transcend” the human experience, or perhaps only when you die, do you get to have a spiritual experience. But not here, not now, not in the heart of this embodied madness.

Even Webster's Dictionary distinguishes spiritual life from our embodied form, defining spirituality as, among other things, that which is "concerned with or affecting the spirit or soul", "lacking material body or form or substance...the vital transcendental soul belonging to the spiritual realm", "of or pertaining to the moral feelings or states of the soul", and "of or pertaining to the soul or its affections as influenced by the spirit...proceeding from the holy spirit; pure; holy; divine; heavenly-minded; opposed to carnal."

We even see this view in the famous saying by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: "We are spiritual beings having a human experience." Don't misunderstand – I understand why we resonate with this saying – it reminds us that we actually are spiritual beings, something we can easily lose sight of in the heart of our daily challenges.

But what is missing is even more important. What is missing is: he doesn't also say, "We are also human beings having a spiritual experience." Nor does he dare to suggest that there may actually be no distinction between our spiritual life and our human life. He keeps them distinct, and at most, allows for the possibility that our humanness is one fragment of our spiritual life. And this is the same mistake we have been making for centuries.

We have been desacralizing the self, imagining it something less than Sacred and Divine.

This leads us in the wrong direction and, although it may provide momentary relief from the challenges of the human experience, it actually perpetuates the (illusory) divide, concretizing the idea that being human is necessarily sub-standard, ultimately turning us away from the necessary work we must do to bring ourselves into integration and make sacred

our humanness.

Simply put, our definition of “spiritual” has meant the bypassing of the challenges of the human experience. They have been severed, abandoned, and transcended in the name of a “higher” or stiller or emptier or more evolved path. Through this lens, spirituality is a shadowless and formless skyscape, one where the sun never stops shining and where we float – peaceful, silent and still – far above the messy complexity of the human experience. Love and light and everything nice.

Does this matter? It matters a lot, particularly for those of who seek an inclusive and humane world. In the same way greedy, unconscionable capitalism is destroying us, humanity-severed spirituality is destroying us. It’s all part of the same power-seeking patriarchal system – one that focuses on “mastery” at the expense of connectiveness, one that focuses on being above rather than being among.

Because if we don’t believe that what happens to the “human” is spiritually relevant, we won’t bother to improve our behavior or become more inclusive in our thinking. We won’t stop to look at our effect on each other. We won’t bother to worry about human rights, or healing our trauma, or crafting legal and political structures that reflect our sacred significance. Why would we bother to focus on inclusivity and human value if we believe that our experience of God or Enlightenment or Divinity, is not down here among us, but is way up there, far above the human fray?

This perspective, this division between spirituality and humanness, is taking us far away from our embodied lives – the only place we can heal and transform as

a species.

And it invites all manner of unethical behaviour in patriarchal power-brokers. Because when you are “above” your humanness, you are also above the law. And you can always claim that your actions are acceptable because your human behaviour is not you.

This view is as fundamental to unconscionable capitalism as it is to ungrounded spirituality. And it’s wrong – if anything reflects your spiritual stage, it’s your actions. Spiritual maturity and emotional maturity are synonymous.

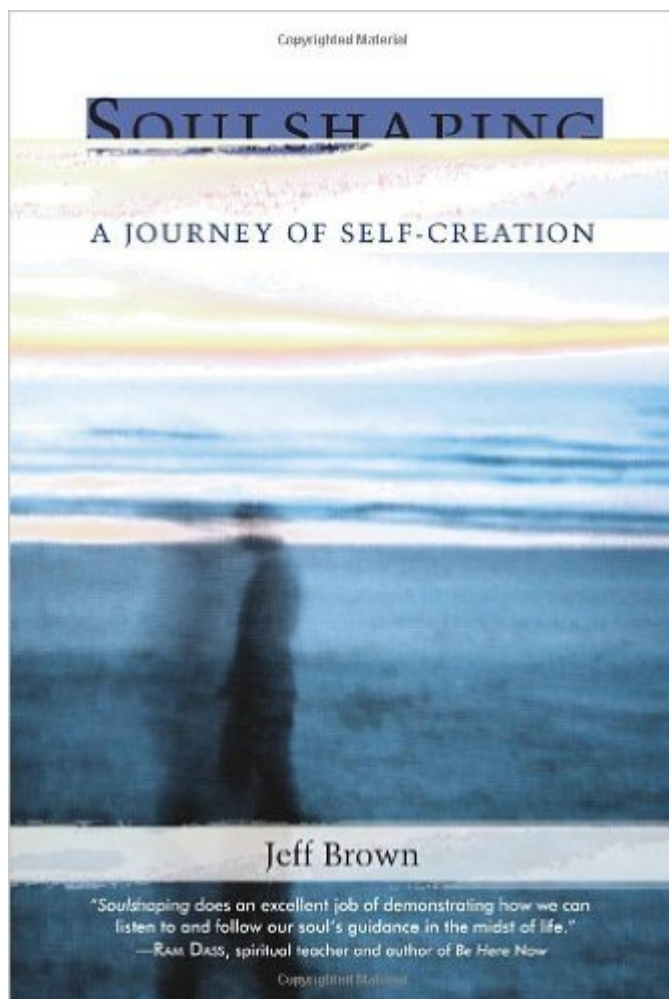
Instead, we must bring spirituality and humanness together, arriving at the understanding that spirituality *is* reality – not somewhere we go to “rise above” or seek refuge from the challenges of the human experience – but an experience that is all-encompassing and ever-inclusive. That is, that the most spiritual being is the one who is the most engaged in and connected to all aspects of the human experience – what I call “spirit-reality”, or Enrealment.

From this vantage point, one cannot ignore the traumas and needs of humanity because one understands that all of it is sacred. That all of it *matters*. And then we are inspired to take action, in every sphere of society, to craft structures, systems, and laws that honor, encourage, and connect us. With those in place, no one gets left behind, and every human gets an opportunity to participate and improve their life conditions.

Inclusivity – within and between us, and at the heart of a humanized notion of spirituality – is not just a “politically correct” progressive notion. It’s a way of being that leads to a more just and humane world – one where every one of us matters. Every struggle. Every wound. Every dream. All sacred. And when we believe that we matter, we cannot help but work

together to co-create a just and compassionate world for all.

Jeff is the author of [Soulshaping: A Journey of Self-Creation](#) , [Ascending with Both Feet on the Ground: Words to Awaken your Heart](#) and [An Uncommon Bond](#) .



Including APOLOGIES TO THE DIVINE FEMININE

Ascending with Both Feet On the Ground

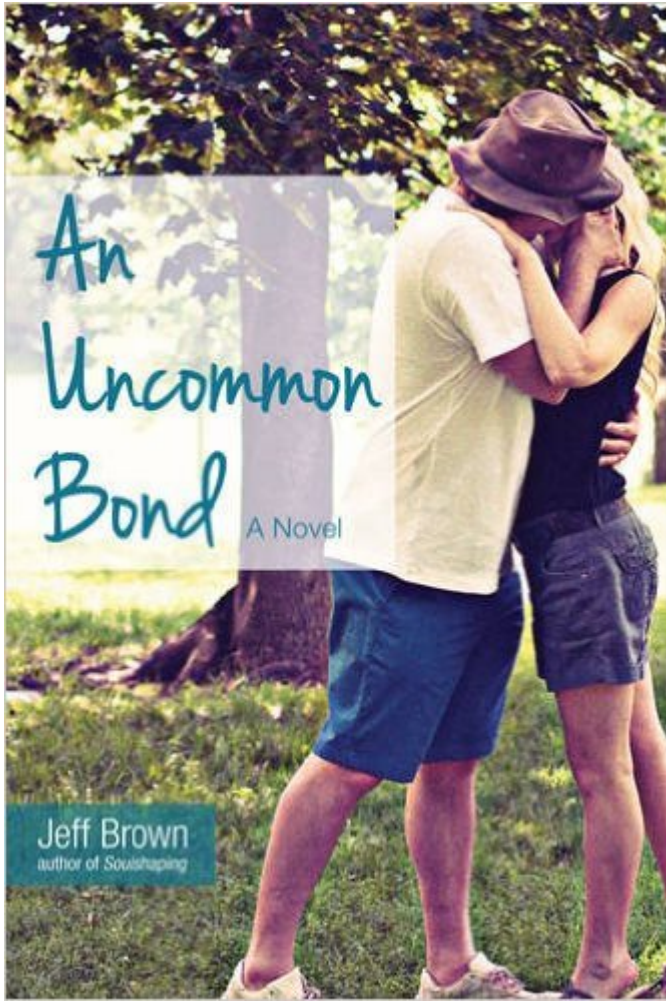
Words to Awaken your Heart

JEFF BROWN

Author of *Soulshaping*



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Words. So powerful. They can crush
a heart, or heal it. They can shame
a soul, or liberate it. They can shatter
dreams, or energize them. They can
obstruct connection, or invite it. They
can create defenses, or melt them.
We have to use words wisely.

Jeff Brown

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