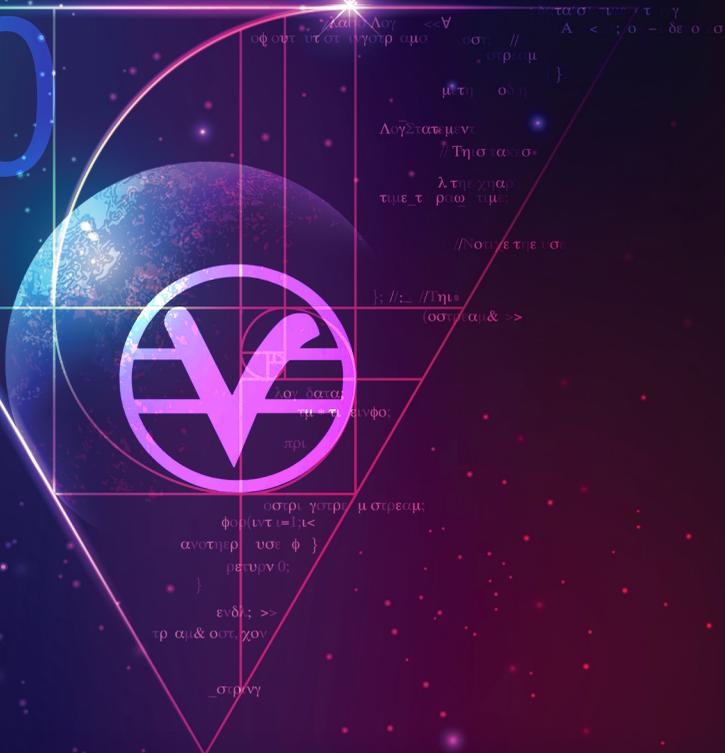


WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE?

10



**A JOURNEY THROUGH
SCIENCE OF MIND
PRINCIPLES, PRACTICES
AND METHODS**

Background artwork by Jackie Niam

BY PETRA WELDES

This is the first in a three-part series exploring the practical application of Science of Mind beliefs and how to use them in life-changing, thought-changing ways.

How many times have we stumbled for words when asked, “What do you believe?” or “What is the Science of Mind?” We wonder where to begin, what ideas to focus on and how to explain something that intuitively resonates within us. And we may dread the follow-up questions that all seem to start with, “Do you believe in (fill in the blank with Jesus, God, the Devil, the Bible, the 10 Commandments)?”

I’ve watched people try to define their passionately held beliefs while sharing the inner awareness and personal growth they’ve experienced from the Science of Mind. I’ve also observed that we tend to answer these questions from the part of the teachings that speak to us the most. Some people focus on the idea of Oneness — that we are part of the human family, that we are all one and that our unity with the God within is what’s most important.

Others focus on their ability to manifest and co-create amazing lives, and some focus on the necessity of taking responsibility for the thoughts and patterns left over from childhood or trauma and the way these things shape our lives. Some focus on the fact that we are teaching the teachings of Jesus, while others home in on how science is beginning to catch up with what we practice and teach. Many focus on how Science of Mind has helped them live a thriving life, and other practitioners speak about learning compassionate engagement with all of humanity and creation.

WHAT WE BELIEVE

In 1926, Ernest Holmes was asked to write about what he believed, and it was published in this very magazine. Later it was adopted as a statement of “What We Believe” to help define and describe the answer to this question. Not intended to be a dogmatic statement that one has to fully buy into or obediently repeat, it was intended to engage in the philosophical and theological questions that all spiritual traditions, philosophies and science seek to answer.

Since humanity started searching for meaning and purpose in life, we have asked the same questions: Where do we come from? Where does *everything* come from? How did it get here? Is there something behind it, creating and managing it? And maybe most importantly, what is the point of all of this? What’s the point of my life?

These are the huge questions we each grapple with in our own way. And this is what people want to know when they say, “Tell me what you believe.” We may have some vague ideas or clearly defined answers, but either way, these notions are actually the heart of the belief system upon which we base our actions and build our lives. It is the heart of the message we have to share with others as well.

When reading “What We Believe” (which we call our “Declaration of Principles”), we can wonder why in the world some of the statements are in there and what they mean. For instance, why is it important that “God, the One, Indestructible, Absolute Cause” is self-existent? This statement engages in the philosophical issue called “infinite regress”: Who created the world? God. Who created God? Or what came before the Big Bang? And what came before that? Self-existent means nothing created it. So we believe that the nature of reality is fundamentally spiritual and that this One Reality has always, eternally and infinitely been present.

Another confusing statement at the beginning of our “Declaration of Principles” is, “This One manifests Itself in and through all creation but *is not absorbed by Its creation.*” Why do we care about this? This is important because Science of Mind is not a pantheistic faith but rather pan(en)theistic. Claiming Science of Mind is merely pantheism is a way some dismiss or disregard the mystical and transcendent nature on which Science of Mind is built. Pan(en)-theism is a recognition that the One is both immanent (within us) and transcendent (the great mystery of the Divine beyond all human comprehension).

This is also an age-old conundrum of separation and duality that Science of Mind resolves in the paradox that both of these spiritual ideas are *simultaneously* true.

FROM ABSTRACT TO STRAIGHTFORWARD

“But I’m not a theologian,” you may say, and, “Who cares about these abstract ideas anyway? I believe what’s in my heart and what I intuitively know.” True, true. But then we are left fumbling to explain, and more importantly share, what we so passionately believe — quite frankly, sometimes even to ourselves.

Not taking the time to truly understand what it is we believe can mask the fact that while we may be using new words, our beliefs themselves haven’t fully shifted. We have simply changed the language. And those old beliefs are still running us and still coming out in our inability to clearly define and share what we intuitively know.

Centers for Spiritual Living and its education department have once again sought to clarify what we believe through a new articulation of our principles and practices. This is easily the second or third time we’ve been through this over the years. Each time, we are furthering our understanding of Science of Mind and finding more up-to-date language to explain it.

In addition, revisiting this makes it possible for our principles to be taught worldwide and in many different cultural contexts, creating solid ground from which we teach in our local communities and online.

Most importantly, we want to find powerful yet simple language to capture the transformative ideas on which Science of Mind is based so each one of us can truly engage in a heartfelt connection when someone wants to know what we believe.

AN EXPRESSION OF THE ONE

So, what do we believe and where do we start? Well, we can start in the same place that religion, philosophy and science do: Where does it all come from?

Science of Mind teaches that life is a unified whole. There isn’t a part of life one place and the rest of it someplace else. This means Science of Mind solidly falls into the philosophical understanding that everything comes from and is an expression of the One. That means everything in the physical universe, the tangible space/time continuum, is part of this Wholeness, comes from It and is made out of It. We generally use the words oneness or unity to capture this idea.

But that doesn’t answer the next question, “Why?” Why is there anything or everything? This causes us to dive more deeply into our understanding of the nature of reality.

If It is all One, then the fish, stars, photons and you are all individualized expressions, all ways through which the One is expressing and experiencing Itself. Spirit has become creation by making creation out of Itself (both physical and intangible, including all the qualities of life). And isn’t that the best definition of love? Not like I love chocolate or I love movies, but rather I love my child, partner and humanity. I love my job, creativity and life.

We don’t actually give ourselves to chocolate or the movies, do we? Instead, we expect them to give something to us. Yet don’t we truly give ourselves — hopefully our best selves — to those people and things we really love? This is exactly what the One is doing — giving Itself into, through and as creation. And that is all creation,

including you. Spirit's desire to give Itself into expression is the impulse behind creation.

So love is the impulse behind all creation, and that makes creation good, blessed, joy-filled and the genuine expression of love.

"How does the impulse of love make creation?" is another way of asking, "How is creation created?" Did some random act of atoms clumping together form little balls of matter and start whirling around in the sky? Did a deity decide to create this little blue ball and then put humans on it to test us in some fashion? Is this deity still interested in and involved in creation? Or once it got it started, is creation on its own? Haven't we all wondered these things, either in Sunday school, science class or when confronted with bad things happening to good people?

More questions follow: Were humans created by the One for fun, for companionship or for some other purpose? And if so, can humans engage with the gods in some way, either through offerings, intuition or the use of spiritual laws? In this way, we come to the final question: What's it all about? Are we trying to get out of the suffering on Earth? Do we feel that the things of physical life aren't really sacred or spiritual, so we seek to transcend, rise above or leave it all behind?

FINDING THE EXPLANATIONS

How Science of Mind answers these questions may be different from what we are used to from either the Western or Eastern faiths. We emphasize the three aspects of the nature of reality (Spirit, law and body), its spiritual laws and how the creative process works. Because we believe that as expressions of this one spiritual reality, we are here to create our lives and co-create the ongoing emerging evolution of humanity into our spiritual magnificence.

This is a radically different notion than believing we have to find God, connect with God, build a relationship with God or even try to be one with God. We are already one with all that is. No wonder this is sometimes hard to talk about.

I think one of the most exciting things to share about Science of Mind is that we believe we are spiritual beings having a human experience and that we are free to use the creative process to create heaven (or hell) right here on Earth.

We believe we are already immortal and that our lives grow and expand eternally. Some of these ideas are so different from what others are familiar with, they can be challenging to explain, especially

if you are trying to answer questions coming from someone else's faith, using words based on their scriptures and sets of beliefs. Yet just like us, there are many who respond to these ideas with a deep resonance and instant recognition.

To deepen our understanding and ability to share what we believe, on the following pages you will find an updated articulation of our principles written for a 21st-century, global humanity. I trust you will find new and insightful language for answering the question, "What do you believe?" All we are doing is giving intentional and accessible words to what your heart and intuition already know is true. ☸

Next month, we will examine the practices that help us move these principles from theory into spiritual living. It's not enough to talk about what we believe. Practicing, applying and living these principles are, in fact, what has already created transformation in my life, your life and what we hope others will experience.



SCIENCE OF MIND PRINCIPLES: EFFECTIVELY MODERNIZED

The principles of Science of Mind articulate the basic ideas of the theory and philosophy of this teaching. The principles help us understand the nature of reality — the Infinite Presence and the universal law, the nature of creation and our place in it and who we are in the scheme of things. However, principles are more than just intellectual ideas; they form the foundation for the way we engage in and co-create our lives.

1. Oneness: There is One Infinite Reality. We call It many names, including, but not limited to God, Life, Universal Spirit, Infinite Intelligence, First Cause or the Thing Itself. The One Infinite Reality is undivided, complete and whole within Itself. This Oneness creates everything out of Itself and therefore includes both the absolute and relative, tangible and intangible, physical and metaphysical aspects of reality.

2. Love: Love is the self-givingness of Universal Spirit through Its desire to express Itself in terms of creation. Love is the impulse, and Law is the way of creation.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE?

3. Creation: The physical universe is the manifest body of the One Infinite Reality, and the One Infinite Reality is more than the physical universe. Creation is an expression of the One Infinite Reality. It is inherently good and is ever evolving toward greater expressions of good.

4. Threefold Nature: The One Infinite Reality expresses Itself in three aspects: Spirit, law and body. Each individual is made in the image and likeness of the One Infinite Reality and has these same three aspects.

5. Creative Process: The One Infinite Reality operates through the universal law of cause and effect. This universal law is impersonal, automatic and intelligent. The universal law receives the direct impress of Spirit's impulse and acts upon It, bringing It into form. Individuals, having the same threefold nature, use the creative process to shape our human experience in alignment with the whole, perfect and complete reality.

6. Spiritual Laws: Universal Spirit maintains harmony, equilibrium and balance through spiritual law. There are various expressions and uses of spiritual law. Examples include the law of correspondence, the law of attraction and the law of giving and receiving. Spiritual laws are impersonal, consistent and intelligent and are always operating. Consciously, individuals can learn to use these laws to create or change conditions.

7. Spiritual Beings: The One Infinite Reality is both transcendent and immanent. Individual human beings are spiritual beings living in a spiritual universe having a human experience. This is our true nature.

8. Freedom: Freedom is the birthright of every individual. We are free to choose and create our experience of life.

9. Heaven: Heaven is the state of awareness of our true nature. We experience our true nature to the degree we become conscious of it. We actively seek to know the true nature of every individual and celebrate each individual's unique expression of it. This experience of our true nature is sure to be attained by all.

10. Eternal Life: The One Infinite Reality is eternal. We believe in the eternality, the immortality and the continuity of the individual, forever and ever expanding. ☸

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