Caveat / Disclaimer

Anything I may say about folk religions is:
- Real (somewhere),
- And Not Real (but not everywhere),
- And both Real and Not Real (depending on your current frame of reference),
- And neither Real nor Not Real (your current frame of reference doesn't apply).

"real"
what someone's prepared to act on

"Religion"

Until they run into an essentialist religion, most folk "religions" don't even have a word to identify them; even the word "religion" may be missing. If they think of it at all, it is thought of as a set of identifying practices — this is who we are[†]; often these practices are not considered religion.

[†] Of course, as territorial entities, there are always boundaries, but they tend to be rather permeable, allowing for the ready exchange of materials, ideas and even people.

(*) Folk Religion

Either: 1) "Religion which occurs in small, local communities which does not adhere to the norms of large systems."
Or: 2) "An appropriation of large system religious beliefs and practices at a popular level."

1)
- paganisms
- Ethnic religions
- Neopaganisms

guide / apprentice

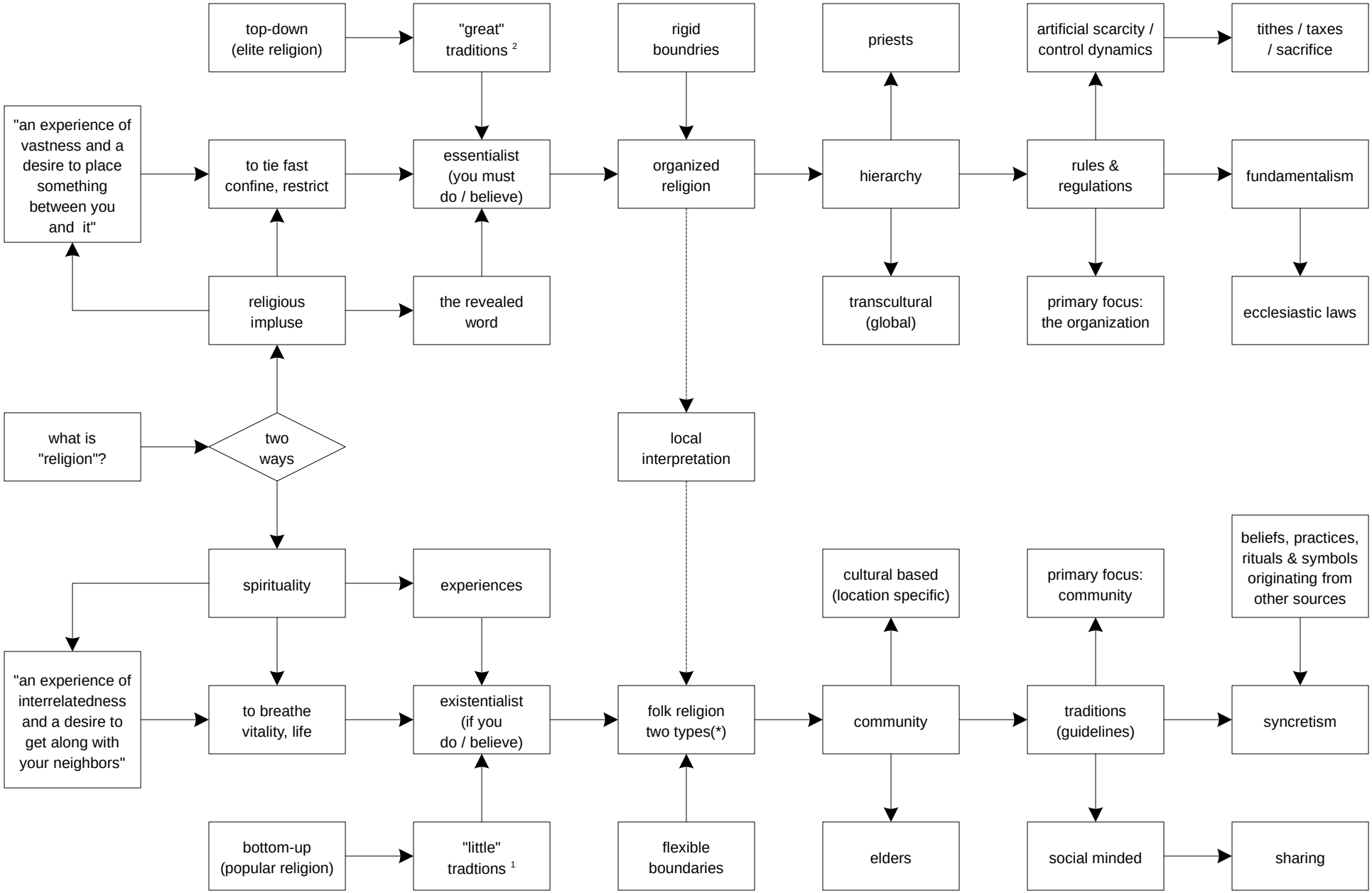
2)
- Judaism
- Christianity
- Islam
- Buddhism
- Hinduism
- Taoism

master / disciple

What Are Unifying Practices of Folk Religion?

- Typically have no formal creed or sacred text
- Tend to be collaborative and accretive
- Tend to be animistic — the supernatural is present within and affecting the physical realm
- Locations, objects and events have a particular embodied god
- Spiritual forces have power over and impact human affairs
- Often bring external religious practices into another religion
- Often employ divination, magic, or special religious rituals
- Often employ talismans or ascribe spiritual power to particular objects for protection or good luck
- Often employ rituals to keep evil spirits or forces at bay
- Often incorporated ancestor worship/veneration
- Embrace popular divine manifestations that originate within a larger religious tradition.

Before the industrial revolution and planned obsolescence, most people did not throw away anything that was not plentiful and might be reused in one form or another.


top-down (elite religion)
"great" traditions 2
rigid boundries
priests
artificial scarcity / control dynamics
tithes / taxes / sacrifice
"an experience of vastness and a desire to place something between you and it"
to tie fast confine, restrict
essentialist (you must do / believe)
organized religion
hierarchy
rules & regulations
fundamentalism
religious impluse
the revealed word
transcultural (global)
primary focus: the organization
ecclesiastic laws
what is "religion"?
two ways
local interpretation
spirituality
experiences
cultural based (location specific)
primary focus: community
beliefs, practices, rituals & symbols originating from other sources
"an experience of interrelatedness and a desire to get along with your neighbors"
to breathe vitality, life
existentialist (if you do / believe)
folk religion two types(*)
community
traditions (guidelines)
syncretism
bottom-up (popular religion)
"little" tradtions 1
flexible boundaries
elders
social minded
sharing