



ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT MSR NEWSLETTER

Management, Spirituality & Religion

David C. Trott, Editor

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Examining Multi-Level or Holistic Spiritual Phenomena in the Workplace

By Judi Neal and Joel Bennett

A key practical question in workplace spirituality is how to put ideas and theories into practice. A review of the literature (Neal, 1997) reveals that most authors and practitioners focus on only one of four possible levels of analysis: (1) Individual, (2) Group, (3), Organizational, and (4) Societal. It is our contention that researchers and practitioners will be more effective if they simultaneously consider these four levels rather than only one at a time in their analysis. This way they make the most informed decisions about what to study or where to intervene in the system. For example, practitioners now have access to a growing set of organizational change strategies that require sensitivity to multiple levels (Holman & Devane, 1999). And, in a parallel fashion, researchers can draw from recent advances in multi-level statistical methods (Klein & Kozlowski, 2000). This brief article seeks to 1) situate such change strategies and research methods within the broader framework of organizational spirituality, and 2) stimulate conversation and research about spirituality across all levels of organizations. In fact, we propose that those change strategies and research methods that are more multi-level or holistic (rather than fragmentary) would ultimately provide a more sensitive and accurate reading of spiritual phenomena in the workplace.

We propose that just as an individual has a soul, groups and organizations also have a soul or consciousness. And as Peter Russell (1995) postulates, there is now a global brain or global consciousness that is emerging. Ken Wilber (1996) describes a holistic view of evolution where the next level of consciousness transcends and enfolds the previous levels of consciousness. In the spirituality in the workplace movement, we see an emergence of interest beginning with the individual focus on work as a spiritual path, with some people then becoming interested in discovering how to work with spiritual principles and practices at the team level. A far smaller number of people are taking concrete action to integrate spirituality at the organizational level, and even fewer who are considering its implications for the societal or global level. Yet each level should transcend and enfold that which has gone before. This parallels the notion of "levels of consciousness" in personal development or spiritual awakening (Tart, 1987). Just as an individual's level of consciousness may focus on the well-being of their own person, their relationships, and their community; so too may an organization focus on its own bottom-line, its interconnection with other organizations, and its role within the global society (cf. corporate responsibility and sustainability, Reflections, 2000).

Below is a brief description of each of the four levels. We distinguish these here for purposes of clarifying levels. We do not wish to reify a view that focuses on only one level. Rather, we contend that each level both shapes and is influenced by phenomena at other levels in a constant, living, holistic process.

(1) Spirituality in the Workplace at the Individual Level

The spirituality in the workplace movement has grown one person at a time with no leader or central organizing group, although certain people have made significant contributions, including Martin Rutte (Canfield et al, 1997), Jack Hawley (1993), Meg Wheatley (1993, 1996), Hazel Henderson (1996), Richard Barrett (1998), and Joe Jaworski (1997). This movement is an example of the Aquarian Conspiracy so aptly described by Marilyn Ferguson (1993) three decades ago. People feel individually called to live in greater congruence with their spiritual principles and practices. It can be a lonely process until you find like-minded seekers and begin to create community. The key focus at the individual level is seeing work as a spiritual path, as a way to grow spiritually as a person.

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New Academy Group Plans 2001 Program

*Lee Robbins, 2001 Program Chair,
Golden State University*

Last year, thanks to the efforts of Jerry Biberman, Judi Neal, Chris Guyer and many others, the Academy Board approved a new unit of the Academy of Management, Spirituality and Religion (MSR) Interest Group. We focus on the study of the relationship and relevance of spirituality and religion for management and organizations.

After a successful start at last year's meetings, we're planning the MSR program for August 2001 in Washington D.C. We welcome a broad variety of submissions from theoretical to empirical studies, to application and pedagogy and welcome Symposia submitted jointly to other Divisions of Interest Groups.

A few types of MSR submissions that come to my mind include:

- Developing conceptual frames for MSR issues
- Empirical studies of organizations claiming or exhibiting spiritual/religious characteristics including business, governmental, church and other NGO's
- The relationship of ethical systems, spirituality and religion to organizations and leadership
- Pedagogical experimentation, theory and practice
- Experiential or other alternative approaches to spirituality/religion

From the perspective of logical positivism, conceptual frames and theories may seem inferior to empirical work; however, because ours is such a new field, we need better conceptual frames to even bring theory to the

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Examining Multi-Level or Holistic Spiritual Phenomena in the Workplace

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(2) Spirituality in the Workplace at the Group Level

Just as individuals are made up of body, mind, emotion, and spirit, so too does a group have these elements. In-group settings we pay attention to the "body" by making sure that the group has a comfortable physical setting in which to meet. This may include, for example, a round table to encourage participation. We also pay attention to the "mind" of the group through such techniques such as quality circles, TQM teams, and cross-functional teams. We even pay attention to the "emotional life" of a group, recognizing that good group dynamics includes respectfully listening to everyone's opinions and making sure that they feel included. Moreover, we also know that a group has "spirit". The notion of "esprit de corps" or team spirit is a well-researched phenomena in organizational psychology (e.g., Campion, Medsker, & Higgs, 1993) and Ken Blanchard's recent book "Gung Ho" documents an organizational transformation that was stimulated by this group spirit.

(3) Spirituality in the Workplace at the Organizational Level

We make the presumption that the organization is a whole system that is made up of the collective consciousness of its members. Therefore the organization has its own consciousness and perhaps even an organizational soul. We also propose that organizational transformation cannot happen without individual and group transformation. If an organization has a soul, then it must also have a spiritual purpose or mission, just as individuals do. Interesting challenges lie in whether or not we can measure the level of spirituality in organizations for either research or organizational change purposes. Most likely we are going to need to develop new paradigms of research, management, and organizational change in order to incorporate and work with the concept of organizational soul.

(4) Spirituality in the Workplace at the Global Level

According to Teilhard de Chardin (1959), Peter Russell (1995), Ken Wilber (1996), and Willis Harman and John Hormann (1990), and others, the evolution of human consciousness is a natural process. In each of their models, individual consciousness expands so that the person feels more and more connected and "at-one" with their communities, their nations, humanity, all living things, and the planet. Some business leaders are experiencing this expansion of consciousness and it is beginning to affect the way that some people see the role of business in the world. We believe that this underlying evolutionary force and the spirituality in the workplace movement will lead to a redefinition of the role of business in society. The current industrialization process is not sustainable for the environment, for individual cultures, or for the human soul.

Summary

We offer this overview of a multi-level perspective as a way of beginning a dialogue about these issues in the Management, Spirituality, and Religion interest group.

Particular issues that would be useful to explore are:

- How do current paradigms in the field of management science and management education and training promote or maintain a uni-level rather than multi-level view of organizations?
- What types of training or education help managers and business leaders to adapt a broader, holistic view of organizations?
- How can the framework sketched here be useful to the "real world" issues of operations and financial management?
- How does the framework provided here interface with other areas of management science? (e.g., healthcare, human resources, work-life, strategic management, leadership, diversity).
- Have you had experiences which support the notion that organizations have varying levels of consciousness?

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SYLLABUS

LATS 6350

St. Edward's University

"The Spirit of Life's Work":

There are very few constants in the universe. One is change. Another is the belief for most people in the omnipresence and omniscience of a Higher Being/God or Superordinate Spirit. Work as a fundamental human activity is imbued with both and mediated by individual persons acting in the body of a shared humanity. The multi-dimensional nature of work is truly challenging, motivating, and spiritually rewarding. Work dignifies life with meaning and purpose. Not to work is devastating.

This course has been created so students can discover how to effectively integrate one's personal spirituality with their work obligations and responsibilities in a manner that enhances optimum wellness and vitality across three dimensions of relationships: transpersonal, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Students will also explore the ways in which spirituality informs an individual's presence and action in all work endeavors. Based on theory, research, and practical applications this course helps generate awareness and bolsters the argument for adopting a holistic approach that includes the human spirit of all life's work.

This course is the first of its kind to be offered within St. Edward's Master of Liberal Arts program. Dr. David C. Trott has been teaching an undergraduate course "*Spirituality & Work*" for the past three years at SEU and has extended his work to the graduate level. The new MLA program addresses three thematic areas: self and spirituality, community and identity, and interpreting the world.

The assignments:

Students read from the required texts before each class meeting and discuss qualities and characteristics of spiritual well-being, spiritual distress, spirituality, and religion. Students identify their own chosen spiritual values and employ these values in decision-making situations across diverse life spheres. And, students discuss the relationships between spirituality and the changing nature of knowledge and learning as a collaborative activity enthused with the Creator's spirit.

Students also research the individual spiritual expressions and experiences of workers by conducting, summarizing and discussing the major findings of a semi-directed qualitative interview. Students write a final thesis paper in which they apply the principles of theory validation/elaboration vis-a-vis extant theories of spirituality and spiritual well-being.

www.stedwards.edu/mla

CLASSROOM CONNECTION

Joanne Mullen

Spirituality & Work

Spring 2000

Reflection Paper #6

Babies! I forgot to reflect on babies. One of the most uplifting experiences in my weekly life is time spent with Ryanna, my friend's baby, who is currently 7 months old. I used to bring my homework with me when baby-sitting, but I never could get anything accomplished because the baby requires my full attention. In fact, the baby demands much more than my full attention, she demands creative participation. Just getting her into a car-seat requires an entire barnyard of distracting noises and World Wrestling Federation maneuvers. I have spontaneously composed three operas, all with the same tragic hero, the immortal "Itsy-Bitsy" the Sisyphus of Spiders, to accompany our diaper ordeals.

Baby-sitting also requires intuitive anticipation. Watching and understanding her intentions as she crawls across the floor is more challenging than my last six textbooks. She may appear to be innocently crawling towards the TV, but I can detect the glare of purpose in her eyes as which I now interpret as her determination to grab the sleeping cat on top of the TV before it wakes up and escapes. I am poised to intervene. But, on the way she stops suddenly and sits up as if bumped by some invisible force-field. I put on my glasses to see if there is something sticking out of the carpet and indeed there is; a particularly fluffy piece of lint is blocking her path. Staring, she picks it up gingerly with her tiny fingers, pulls it apart, puts it back together then holds it to her ear, adding a narrative only she and the lint can understand. When Ryanna and the lint are through talking, she pops it in her mouth and prepares to resume the crawling position. But I must intervene because her mother said she can't eat non-organic stuff, and I'm certain this qualifies. She blows a raspberry to rev her engines, shakes her head, and with her eyes on the vixen surges ahead toward the sleeping cat. I look at the piece of lint in my hand and wonder how I could have overlooked it on my way across the floor. I can't believe I didn't trip over it, as obvious as it was to Ryanna. I wonder at its potential as a source of great joy and beauty for me, then pop it in my mouth and wait for the cat-attack.

Molly H. Guzzino, ATR, LPC, LMFT

Austin, Texas

Fall 1998

Creativity

This category of creativity appears to be an elaboration of the theory of spiritual well-being and harmonious interconnectedness (Hungelmann et al., 1985; Trott, 1996). Creativity in this study appears as an active agent or overarching quality of spiritual well-being as evidenced when an individual:

- Experiences creativity as a connection of inner self to higher self/ higher consciousness.
- Values the creative process as an extension of the Creator/Divine.
- Views creativity as resulting in feelings of hope and compassion.
- Experiences creative acts as internal moments of transcendence, flow, or opening beyond everyday existence.

Creative acts may provide a superhighway back to the self during times of spiritual distress and personal disconnection.

Creative acts are not a luxury, but a necessity in cultivating hope and renewal of our connection with self, others, and/or the Divine.

INSTRUCTOR HANDOUT

NOTES:

The Best-Practice Model

Adapted from Ian Mitroff and Elizabeth Denton

By best we mean a strategy that is least likely to incur an intense counterreaction by stakeholders

1. Organizations are run fundamentally by principles, no matter how implicit they are,
2. The hybrid Best-Practice Model evolves from the Values-Based Organization:
 - (a) Clearly and succinctly expresses that a spiritual organization is not to be aligned with any particular religion,
 - (b) Begins the pursuit of spirituality in the workplace in terms of the most neutral and least offensive language possible,
 - (c) the underlying metaphor of family is probably the most inclusive with which to proceed,
3. Incorporates the fundamental notion that spirituality adds *vitality* that is not supplied by any other human agency or activity,
4. Has a dimension of hope and optimism,
5. The notion of a higher power is premised on the ideal that God or spirit is not to be construed literally, avoiding getting bogged down in theological debates,
6. Personal responsibility is expanded through enlisting the help of a power greater than oneself,
7. Constant moral inventories ascertain whether an organization is living up to its proclaimed ideals,
8. Incorporates broader philosophical texts, such as Martin Buber, Ken Wilber, *Ben and Jerry's*
9. Attempts to institute daily "acts of kindness",
10. When performing ethical acts, keep the threshold as low as possible,
11. Organizational responsibility must include all internal as well as external stakeholders,
12. It is better to fall short of one's ideals than not to have attempted them at all.

THOUGHT OF THE WEEK

"A far deeper transformation of organizations than has ever been dreamed of is required. Spirituality gives us the constant hope necessary to embark on the path of transformation and to endure the constant setbacks in its way."

– Ian Mitroff and Elizabeth Denton

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- We hypothesize that those change strategies and research methods that are more multi-level or holistic (rather than uni-level) would ultimately provide a more sensitive and accurate reading of spiritual phenomena in the workplace. What data exists to either confirm or refute this hypothesis? Are multi-level approaches necessary or sufficient conditions for understanding workplace spirituality?
- Ultimately, how useful is the view offered here? To who? Why? Why not?

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A Message from the MSR Chair

It is a real privilege and thrill for me to be serving as the first Chair of the Management, Spirituality and Religion Interest Group of the Academy of Management. I would like to thank all of this and last year's MSR officers for all of their help in getting the division started. I also want to thank all of the people who attended all of the sessions on spirituality, religion and related topics that were sponsored by our interest group and by other divisions at last year's Academy meeting in Toronto.

As can be seen from the other items in this newsletter, our interest group is poised to examine some very exciting questions relating to spirituality and religion at a number of possible levels in the workplace

- from a variety of possible research perspectives
- using a variety of possible quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

Our questions allow us to go beyond our traditional paradigms of research and experimental design and methodology to also allow for the use of our intuitions, our hearts and our spirits.

I wish you all health, happiness, and many blessings in the new year and new millennium. I look forward to seeing and working with you at next year's meeting in Washington, DC.

Peace. Jerry Biberman

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testable hypothesis and well framed research questions. Empirical studies, such as Ian Mitroff's recent using survey research and interviews to create and examine a typology of existing spiritual organizations, seem of obvious value. Other recently emerging fields such as positivist psychology and emotional intelligence may suggest directions and concepts for researchers. The Academy seems recently to have become more open to experiential or other types of alternative sessions. These too present opportunities for proposal submissions.

Many Academy members have been teaching sub-units of courses or whole courses embodying spiritual perspectives. Some of these may suggest possible symposia, workshops, and caucus or paper topics. Useful efforts might also be spent in gathering and comparing the results of alternative pedagogical approaches.

In all of these arenas, I believe that we need work at the organizational as well as the individual level of aggregation. Much of the MSR oriented work to date, theoretical, empirical and pedagogical, has been about or directed at individuals, both leaders and ordinary employees. Less seems to have been done at higher levels of aggregation from teams to workplaces to organizations to the larger containing systems of community or nation state. If we are too truly bring a new organizational studies lens to bear on the age old issues of spirituality, we need to include issues of organizational level design, theory and intervention.

Here are some thoughts we had about possible symposia—other ideas are eagerly welcomed as well:

- Perspective on the Nature and Behavior of Spirituality Oriented Business Organizations.
- Alternative Approaches to research Methodology at the Intersections of Management and Spirituality
- Religion and Spirituality: Does IT Make A Difference: implications for management education and practice.
- Career Challenges for Academics & Consultants in MSR

We'll need Peer Reviewers as well as proposal submitters. IF you have questions, please contact the Program Chair as listed below:

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Open Letter from Gerry Ramey

I believe that our interest group has a unique challenge. We must adhere to rigorous standards of research and presentation to insure that our acceptance in AOM. Paradoxically, the people interested in our group usually accept some powerful ideas without substance or proof. My personal exploration has been to understand intellectually and develop clear and precise explanations for the practice of leadership and management. That overly analytical approach is sometimes at odds with a more intuitive or "faith" based approach to understanding or accepting these same practices. The importance of rigorous research to substantiate points of view is critical. At the same time, for our group, it is extremely important to accept the validity of our intuitions, our hearts and our spirits. The aspect of spirituality in the organizations of lives makes it even more important to me personally to continue the exploration of defining the territory through serious study and also to simply accept the truths that become evident in my life. The challenge of reconciling these polar points is pushing the paradox expounded by J.B. Phillips in *YOUR GOD IS TOO SMALL*: an attempt to define the holy litmus of the holy. We need to provide quality research and analysis in order to understand for better application, while at the same time we need to simply accept and enjoy the mystery. This is a monumental task but one well worth the effort.



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