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Spirituality is the new black ...and it has social impact!

Part I – Definitions and concepts

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The enlightenment also has a down side, including the propensity to ignore or positively reject the reality of our spiritual nature, bringing in its wake a widespread sense of ultimate meaninglessness.¹

Introduction

Spirituality is an increasingly significant factor shaping social trends and institutions in the 21st century. Indeed some have argued that it is the mega trend of our time and is informing and underpinning an emerging world view.² As a recent book on the shifts occurring in society stated:

Humanity finds itself in the midst of a major shift in worldview... the shift involves a movement away from a material view of the universe and our place in it to a more *spiritual* view... Nature is no longer merely a neutral object for scientific investigation or a resource for industrial exploitation. It is a sacred order infused with intelligence and purpose – one with which humanity needs to cooperate.³

Before I lose any readers, let me first say that I am not using the term spirituality synonymously with religion. As this paper will make clear they are different constructs, and I regard spirituality to be a biologically prior and innate trait of humans that in some cases may lead some people to religion as we commonly know it but is certainly not the same thing as religion. This may explain the seeming paradox noted by political philosopher Charles Taylor, namely, that we are witnessing a resurgence of interest in spirituality when most social scientists accept some variant of the secularization thesis.⁴ Spirituality and religion are not only diverse but diverging in different directions. As has been observed in the Australian context (but is generally occurring throughout the Western world), 'at a moment when Australians are experiencing a spiritual awakening, the churches that once guided that quest are being left out of the action'.⁵

This paper is the first of several that will examine the implications of what is often referred to as the 'spirituality revolution' or 'spiritual turn' for organizations and business. A key aim of this project is to situate the current discourse on corporate responsibility and corporate citizenship within the broader transformation that is occurring in world views. We may not always know or explicitly acknowledge it but we (and the institutions we form) all think and act according to the assumptions of a particular world view. Having a model of the world is foundational to most people contemplating (if not answering) the most basic existential questions: Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? But world views also create constraints – they keep us (and the institutions we lead and work in) from seeing the assumptions that underlie our beliefs and subsequently our behaviour. As a recent report stated:

¹ David Hay, *Something There – The Biology of the Human Spirit*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2006, p.xi

² Patricia Aburdene, *Megatrends 2010 – The rise of conscious capitalism*, Charlottesville: Hampton Roads, 2005

³ Edmund J Bourne, *Global Shift – How a new worldview is transforming humanity*, Oakland, CA: New Harbinger, 2008, p.53

⁴ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Harvard University Press, 2007

⁵ Deirdre Macken, 'Faith in modern spirits', *Australian Financial Review*, April 5-9, 2007, p.48

An increasingly greater proportion of people are recognizing that habitual ways of thinking and doing must change or we risk catastrophic outcomes. And yet the shifts in perspective being called for seem to exceed our capacity to respond. We are constrained by a limited way of thinking about the world and our potential – a worldview – that we have inherited from the past and that may be incapable of overcoming the challenges it has created.⁶

We stand at a point of transformation and as has occurred at other times in history (e.g. the Copernican revolution) the dominant world view has reached its use by date. In this forthcoming series of papers I will argue that we are between world views and that this transition has implications for reforming one of the most powerful institutions of the modern era – the corporation. Attempts by one of the most recent reform movements to ‘civilize’ the corporation, namely the loose alliance of thinkers, practitioners and activists within the ‘Corporate Responsibility movement’ have been limited by the extent to which its proponents remain within the framework of the current dominant world view. I will argue in forthcoming papers that the movement needs to embed itself more fully in the emerging world view (one that is being underpinned by a new spirituality and science) if it is to achieve its goals.

Traditionally spirituality has been somewhat marginal in the social sciences. As Charles Taylor stated in his 2007 Templeton Prize speech, ‘the culture of the humanities and social sciences has often been surprisingly blind and deaf to the spiritual’. Another pioneer of the scholarly study of spirituality, David Hay said, ‘I think people are naturally spiritual...and the culture surrounding them crushes it out of them – sometimes suppresses, sometimes represses it. And this leads to a great deal of unhappiness’.⁷

But the winds of change are slowly blowing through the corridors of university social science faculties and business schools, slowly ‘restoring our sight and hearing’ with respect to this key human dimension. Indeed, spirituality has become of increasing interest to management scholars and practitioners, political scientists, sociologists, social scientists more broadly, especially those concerned with wellbeing and health⁸, and most surprising (or perhaps disturbing!) of all, economists. As a feature article in a leading financial daily stated:

Spirituality is not just a personal quest of the twenty first century; it’s a multi-disciplinary subject. It’s cropping up in physics, in biology, health care, sociology, management, social welfare...even find economists writing on it.⁹

Leaving aside for the moment issues of definition, consider the following indicators of the rise of interest in spirituality in the business and management studies:

⁶ Institute of Noetic Sciences, *The 2007 Shift Report: Evidence of a World Transforming*, IONS, 2007

⁷ Interview with David Hay, ‘A child’s spirit’, Encounter program, ABC Radio, 19 November 2006.

⁸ Andrew J Weaver, Kenneth I Pargament, Kevin J Flannelly & Julia E Oppenheimer, ‘Trends in the Scientific Study of Religion, Spirituality, and Health: 1965 – 2000’, *Journal of Religion and Health*, 45(2), 2006, pp. 208-214.

⁹ Macken, op.cit, p.48

- The publication of several special issues of management journals dedicated to the issue of spirituality and organizations, spirituality and the workplace and/or spirituality and leadership;¹⁰
- A growing number of conferences, books and articles on the same topics including the first handbook on spirituality and workplace performance in 2003¹¹ and the founding of the academic *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion* in 2004;
- The formation of an approved interest group on Management, Spirituality and Religion as part of the Academy of Management in 1999;
- An increasing number of courses on spirituality and business being offered in MBA programs and the establishment of academic centres for teaching and research in the area in at least eight universities in North America including Princeton, Yale and Harvard.¹²

Before we turn more fully to examine the work and ideas contained in these journals and books, we need to lay some ground work for thinking and understanding the concept of spirituality, and that is the subject of this paper.

What is this thing called spirituality?

It may seem like a futile exercise to attempt to define something that is different and personal for everyone. The concept or definition of spirituality in part eludes many in the social sciences because of its 'fuzzy' nature and a lack of consensus on what it means. As with many such concepts, we often intuitively know what we mean by them even though we struggle with trying to logically define them. As David Hay observed of the experience he and his colleagues had on embarking on an empirical study of spirituality:

[T]he variety of opinions that emerged [among academics who were knowledgeable of the subject] simply increased our confusion, but something interesting did emerge from this apparent failure. Everybody agreed that whilst pinning spirituality down to an agreed definition seemed impossible, they were able to recognise it when they came face to face with it.¹³

The following small selection of definitions of spirituality gives a flavour of how social scientists, many of whom are writing about spirituality and business and/or organizations and/or workplace understand the concept:

¹⁰ See for instance: *Journal of Management Inquiry*, (2000, 2005); *Journal of Managerial Psychology* (1994, 2002); *Journal of Organizational Change Management* (1999, 2003, 2004); *Journal of Management Education* (2000); *Organization* (2003); *Leadership Quarterly* (2005)

¹¹ R.A. Giacalone & C.L. Jurkiewicz (eds), *Handbook of Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Performance*, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2003.

¹² On MBA courses, see C. Driscoll & M. McKee, 'Restorying a culture of ethical and spiritual values: A role for leader storytelling', *Journal of Business Ethics*, 73, 2007, pp.205-17. In 2008 I developed and taught the first (to my knowledge) graduate course on spirituality and business at the University of Sydney as part of the Master of Public Policy/Public Affairs program.

¹³ Hay, op.cit. p.130

- Spirituality is the ‘careful and reflective art of developing a relationship with the sacred’¹⁴
- Spirituality is the ‘basic desire to find ultimate meaning and purpose in one’s life and to live an integrated life’¹⁵
- ‘Spirituality exists wherever we struggle with the issue of how our lives fit into the greater cosmic scheme of things...an idea or practice is “spiritual” when it reveals our personal desire to establish a felt-relationship with the deepest meanings or powers governing life’.¹⁶
- Spirituality is a concern ‘with our deepest sense of meaning, purpose and interconnectedness with one another and the earth we live on’.¹⁷
- ‘The spiritual in human beings makes us ask *why* we are doing what we are doing and makes us seek some fundamentally *better* way of doing it. It makes us want our lives and enterprises to *make a difference*’ [emphasis in original].¹⁸
- ‘Spirituality has to do with the paths people take in their efforts to find, conserve, and transform the sacred in their lives’.¹⁹

Spirituality and religion

Part of the confusion and difficulty in defining spirituality is that at least up until the end of the 20th century, the words spirituality and religion were used, especially in popular discourse as synonyms. The media for instance still often (mistakenly) refers to ‘spiritual leaders’ when what is really meant is *religious* leaders (usually in a position of authority) of a particular religious group or place of worship.

There may be similarities or connections between spirituality and religiosity but it does not necessarily need to be the case. As Robert Fuller pointed out in his book, *Spiritual, but not Religious*, for instance, both terms allude to a belief in a higher power of some kind, be it the more traditional notions of God from the Judeo-Christian tradition or the concept of a universal energy field or force.²⁰ Both terms also describe a desire to connect with this higher power and albeit less so with spirituality than religion, both

¹⁴ David Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution*, Sydney: Harper Collins, 2003, p.28

¹⁵ Il Mitroff & EA Denton, *A spiritual audit of corporate America: A hard look at spirituality, religion and values in the workplace*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999, p.xiv

¹⁶ Robert C Fuller, *Spiritual, but not Religious*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

¹⁷ Tim Costello, ‘Spirituality and love at work’ in C. Barker and A Payne (eds) *love @ work*, Qld: John Wiley & Sons/Australian Institute of Management. 2006, p.212

¹⁸ Danah Zohar & Ian Marshall, *Spiritual Capital – Wealth we can live by*, London: Bloomsbury, 2004, p.29

¹⁹ Brian J Zinnbauer, Kenneth Pargament & Allie B Scott, ‘The emerging meanings of Religiousness and Spirituality: Problems and prospects’, *Journal of Personality*, 67(6), p.909

²⁰ See for example Greg Bradden, *The Divine Matrix*, California: Hay House, 2007.

concepts also have an interest in rituals and practices that help deepen one's spirituality or religiosity, be it yoga and meditation or attending church.²¹

The result of this confusion between spirituality and religion is that much of the writing on the 'new spirituality' is about what spirituality is *not*, in particular, how it is different to religion. The two examples below, the first from an academic scholar of spirituality and the second by a best-selling popular author on spirituality illustrate the point:

'[S]pirituality refers to our relationship with the sacredness of life, nature, and the universe, and this relationship is no longer felt to be confined to formal devotional practice or to institutional places of worship...*spiritual development is the intrinsic human capacity and yearning to embed the self in something greater than the self. In contrast, religions are the cultural mechanisms that can provide rituals and beliefs to aid this process*'.²²

'[R]eligion asks you to learn from the experience of others. Spirituality urges you to seek your own'.²³

In short, the two concepts have become 'polarised' in the scholarly and popular literature. Table 1 summarizes some of the key differences often noted between the 'new' spirituality and religion taken from recent writing and studies. While stark academic dichotomies do not always do justice to the complexities, subtleties and contradictions present in real life, the characteristics of religion and spirituality depicted in Table 1 suggest that the two concepts diverge in several important respects. While traditional approaches generally saw religion as a 'broad-band construct' that was not differentiated from spirituality, and religion was seen as having both positive and negative aspects, modern approaches (such as those depicted in Table 1) tend to define religion more narrowly and explicitly distinguish it from spirituality. Religion is generally viewed as negative (with connotations of doctrine, institutionalization and authoritarianism) while spirituality is generally viewed more positively (as an individual journey and exploration of the self).²⁴

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²¹ Fuller, op.cit.

²² Tacey, op.cit p.38

²³ Neale Donald Walsch, *Conversations with God*, Vol 1., Sydney: Hodder, 2005.

²⁴ Zinnbauer et al, op.cit, p. 898-99

Table I : Differences between Religion and Spirituality

Religion	Spirituality
Usually passed on from parent to child	Usually discovered through life experience
An external system of beliefs and practices	An internal 'system' of beliefs
Based on patterns of worship and ritual	Worship and rituals may exist but vary by person
Tends to separate and exclude	Generally connects and includes
Practiced in the public realm, e.g. institutions	Practiced in the private and personal realm
Associated with Church attendance	May be part of informal groups & networks
Commitment to orthodox beliefs	Higher levels of unorthodox beliefs
Behavioural	Experimental
Doctrinal, regulated and authoritarian	Spontaneous, freely available and democratic
One-sided and imbalanced	Holistic and balanced

Source: Adapted from a range of texts and articles cited in this paper

In part, these differences are seen to account for the wide spread trend observed across the Western world of falling Church attendance and adherence to institutional forms of religion and the rise in popularity of spirituality as reflected in interest in Eastern-based religions, yoga, meditation, and other eclectic so-called 'new age' practices and beliefs. The reasons driving the rising interest in spirituality are examined in detail in a separate paper,²⁵ but as one scholar has noted:

[R]eligion as a powerful influence in individual or societal life seems to be in trouble. On the other hand, spirituality has rarely enjoyed such a high profile, positive evaluation, and even economic success as it does...today.²⁶

²⁵ G. Zappalà, Spirituality is the new black...and it has a social impact! (Part II – Explaining the increased interest in spirituality), forthcoming CSI Background Paper

²⁶ Sandra M Schneiders, 'Religion and Spirituality: Strangers, Rivals, or Partners?', The Santa Clara Lectures, Santa Clara University, 2000, p.1.

The polarization of views has led some to attempt to reconcile the constructs of religion and spirituality. This work, examined in the following section, is helpful in reaching a working definition of spirituality that can be applied to the business and organizational field.

Religion and Spirituality: Synthesis or antithesis?

Three main disciplinary approaches can be identified that have attempted reconciliation between religion and spirituality and in the process outlined what they see as an 'appropriate' definition of spirituality:

- 1) Theological approaches;
- 2) Psychological approaches; and
- 3) Biological perspectives.

While the first two have provided valuable insights the resulting outcome with respect to understanding spirituality remains problematic. In contrast, the third provides the best synthesis for understanding the potential social impact and implications of spirituality as well as operationalising it as a concept that can be applied to the study of organizations and business. The following section summarises a key representative from each of these approaches to illustrate the main arguments (and consequent problems) rather than provide a comprehensive survey of each discipline.

Theological approach

An influential exponent from a theological perspective is Sr. Sandra Schneiders, Professor of New Testament Studies and Christian Spirituality, at the Jesuit School of Theology, Berkeley. Surveying the recent literature she argues that the main models of the relationship between religion and spirituality can be categorized according to whether they are seen as:

- 1) Strangers (where there is no connection between the two constructs);
- 2) Rivals (where the two constructs are in conflict, e.g. 'spiritual but not religious');
- 3) Partners (where the two constructs are seen as two dimensions of the same enterprise).

She suggests that the rise of post-modernism in the social sciences has led to the dominance of the first two models, unnecessarily excluding a model which focuses on how they can mutually enrich one another. While accepting that religion has had problems due to its 'institutionalisation', 'exclusivity' and 'ideological dogma' she concludes that religion and spirituality should not be seen as either two separate entities or in conflict with one another but as two sides of the same coin, albeit often in 'tension but ...essential to each other'.²⁷

²⁷ Schneiders, op.cit, pp.2-3.

While an approach based on partnership may appear at first appealing, a key problem is that it disguises many of the attitudes that are the continuing cause for people around the world turning away from institutional (especially Christian) religion, namely, a certain arrogance, paternalism and belief that the 'masses' cannot be trusted to know what is truly best for them. For despite all the talk of 'partnership', according to Schneiders, people still need to follow or be guided by religion and its orthodoxies. As she states, religion is still the 'optimal context for spirituality'. Furthermore, the 'great religious traditions of the world are much *more adequate matrices for spiritual development and practice than personally constructed amalgams of beliefs and practices*'.²⁸ Schneiders truly reveals her contempt for any form of spiritual democracy and equality when she concludes that '*...the quest for God is too complex and too important to be reduced to a private enterprise*'.²⁹ (!) In other words, the Church rules when it comes to matters spiritual. Spirituality that is not rooted in tradition, an historical community and canon according to Schneiders is potentially dangerous, unsustainable and uninformed.

Psychological approach

A discipline that has examined the area of religion and spirituality both conceptually and empirically since its formal origins at the beginning of the 20th century is psychology. Similar to Schneiders, albeit from a different perspective, the work of Brian Zinnbauer and colleagues has documented a concern with the growing polarization between the concepts of religion and spirituality.³⁰

They also outline three ways in which this polarization has manifested in the work of psychologists. While they do not use the following terms these three 'polarisations' can be labeled:

- 1) The institutional dichotomy;
- 2) The functional dichotomy; and
- 3) The normative dichotomy.

The institutional dichotomy refers to the tendency over the last two or so decades for scholars to distinguish the organized nature of religion as a traditional system of beliefs and practices from the more personal and transcendent quality of spirituality. The second dichotomy refers to the tendency to ascribe to spirituality a functional purpose, so that it represents a range of activities that people do in order to gain meaning in their lives:

Spirituality has come to represent whatever people do to attain a variety of goals, such as meaning in life, wholeness, interconnections with others, truth, and one's own inner potential.³¹

²⁸ Ibid, p.15

²⁹ ibid, p.16

³⁰ Zinnbauer et al, op.cit.

³¹ Ibid, p.902

They note that while in the past it was in fact religion that was seen as serving a ‘functional’ role in people’s lives, it is now seen as ‘peripheral’ to this role and a largely ‘static substantive entity’.

The normative dichotomy refers to the tendency of scholars in this area to cast religion in largely negative terms, as being an institutionalized system of beliefs that are largely ‘mundane’, ‘dogmatic’, and out of touch with people’s life goals and potentials. In contrast, spirituality is generally cast in positive light, as enabling people to reach the highest of human potential and awareness of their relationship to self, others and the wider cosmos. As has been observed, spirituality is often seen as the ‘liberally acceptable cousin’ of religious faith³² or to put it colloquially ‘spirituality is now cool; religion is uncool.’³³

Zinnbauer and colleagues criticize these three polarizations or dichotomies for ignoring the way that religion and spirituality often operate and interact in practice. A couple of examples will suffice to give the general flavour of their arguments. With respect to the first dichotomy, they argue that all if not most religions are primarily concerned with spiritual matters and the search for the sacred. Furthermore, to depict spirituality solely in terms of an individual journey or quest ignores the wider social context within which the ‘spiritual search’ occurs. With respect to the functional dichotomy, they ask how spirituality may be distinguished from other responses to existential issues, and argue:

If the scope of spirituality encompasses virtually all forms of philosophical musings, existential questions, peak experiences, and personal values, then to call something “spiritual” is to communicate very little about it. Without its sacred substantive core, functional spiritualities become unduly broad and bland.³⁴

While with good intentions, their attempt at a synthesis of the two terms (seeing them as ‘partners’ using Schneiders’ framework rather than a polarization) leads them, in a similar fashion to Schneiders, to essentially conflate religion and spirituality rather than distinguish between them. In brief, they argue that there must be an explicit connection to the sacred for something to be spiritual, thus ‘spirituality has to do with the paths people take in their efforts to find, conserve, and transform the sacred in their lives’. By defining spirituality as the ‘search for the sacred’ spirituality, they argue, can be seen as the ‘heart and soul’ of religion, so once again, spirituality becomes subsumed within a religion-based context.

While such a ‘synthesized’ approach may at first seem appealing, a key problem is that the unique nature of spirituality is still not separated out and distilled from religion. As one critic states the problem with this approach is that the ‘psychology gets lost and entangled in theology’.³⁵ According to Helminiak, references to the ‘sacred’ among psychologists of religion are merely a ‘God-substitute’ – ‘conceived as

³² Lorenzo DiTommaso, ‘Spiritual belief vs. secularism’, *The Gazette* (Montreal), 22/9/07, Canada, downloaded from www.canada.com, 9/10/07.

³³ Cited in Zinnbauer et al., op.cit, p.903.

³⁴ Ibid, p.904

³⁵ Daniel A. Helminiak, ‘Whither the Psychology of Religion: A Spirituality-focused discussion of Paloutzian and Park’s (2005) Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality’, *Journal of Religion and Health*, 47, 2008, p.533.

something that is essentially non-human, something that stands over against the human being, not something that is inherent to humanity'.³⁶ Lest the reader gets the wrong idea, these criticisms come from a Roman Catholic priest and theologian, so they are not necessarily coming from an 'anti-religion' stance. His point is essentially that spirituality is a uniquely human quality albeit one that enables the mind to have transcendental capacities and not 'an aspect of human communication with an extra-human, metaphysical reality.' It is quite ironic Helminiak argues that the discipline of psychology (concerned with the study of the human mind) needs to rely on a metaphysical construct of the 'divine' or 'sacred' to explain spirituality rather than seeing it as a unique aspect of the functioning of the human mind and consciousness.

While Helminiak makes no reference to the work of David Hay in his critique his arguments are consistent with the biological view of spirituality which is the subject of the next section.

A biological view of Spirituality

The third and final approach examined is what has been termed the biological view of spirituality. A key proponent of this approach is British zoologist and social scientist David Hay. Drawing on the work of the late zoologist Alistair Hardy and his own empirical investigations into spirituality, Hay argues that we are all endowed with a 'spiritual awareness' that serves an important evolutionary function that over time has been 'naturally selected' in human populations because it is important for our survival. Hay brings together a life time of research into the topic in his book *Something There – the Biology of the Human Spirit*, and illustrates how this hypothesis is supported by the empirical work that has been conducted by social scientists and neuroscientists in several countries over the two decades.

A key concept in Hay's argument is understanding spirituality through what he terms 'relational consciousness'. Put simply, this means how we relate to ourselves, other people, the world, and the notion of transcendence, whether seen as god or some other universal force. Being spiritually aware, is the capacity to allow ourselves the possibility of having a relationship to some 'Other', whether it is the traditional external god of the Judeo-Christian tradition or ecology/science based notions of the earth as Gaia. It is the removal of boundaries between the 'self' and the reality outside the self.

There are three key elements that comprise relational consciousness:

- 1) Awareness-sensing: this refers to the state of being present in the here-and-now, of being mindful, or experiencing a deeper level of consciousness that allows us to be aware of our own awareness.
- 2) Mystery-sensing: this relates to the capacity to transcend the everyday experience and use imagination and deep probing existential questions to make sense of reality.

³⁶ Ibid, p.533

- 3) Value-sensing: this refers to the importance of feelings and emotions in meaning-making as a measure of what we value and give us meaning in life.

Our capacity for relational consciousness according to Hay is determined and/or mediated by our physiology, so in that sense, he argues, we are all 'spiritual', but that spiritual awareness or sensitivity may be more present or developed in some than others. This links nicely into the recent notion of Spiritual Intelligence (SQ) that has been developed separately by Zohar and Marshall.³⁷ Spiritual intelligence will be the subject of forthcoming papers, but in brief, it is the intelligence used to deal with meaning and value and provides the foundation for the effective use of our rational (IQ) and emotional (EQ) intelligence.

Unlike the theological and psychological approaches outlined earlier, the biological view sees spirituality as logically distinct from religion and as the 'biological context in which religion can arise (but does not necessarily do so) rather than the common core of religion'.³⁸ Spirituality in this view is therefore prior to 'any form of religious expression that it might take...it makes religion possible (perhaps even necessary) but [it] does not depend upon religion'.³⁹ This is in contrast to many views that see religion as the prior, if not dominant concept within which people can practice and develop their own spirituality. Seeing spirituality as the primary source has some important implications, as Hay states:

Spiritual awareness is commonly the context out of which religion grows. But spirituality is not religion...I believe it is prior to religion and is a built-in, biologically structured dimension of the lives of all members of the human species. Therefore there are secular as well as religious expressions of spirituality, and many of them.⁴⁰ (emphasis added)

So unlike the theological and psychological approaches the biological view:

- Sees spirituality as a separate and biologically prior concept to religion although spirituality and religion can be related in some cases. It provides a synthesizing framework for the concepts without necessarily polarizing them;
- Sees spirituality as expressed primarily through a certain type of 'relationality' – with the self, others, the environment, god or some other cosmic force. Furthermore, as will be discussed below (and in forthcoming papers) the concept of 'relational consciousness' enables spirituality to be operationalised at an individual, organisational and societal level;
- Sees spirituality as a unique and innately human trait, one that is physiologically determined and that can therefore be expressed in either theist or secular terms.

³⁷ Danah Zohar & Ian Marshall, *Spiritual Intelligence – The ultimate intelligence*, London: Bloomsbury, 2000.

³⁸ Hay, op cit, p.44

³⁹ Zohar & Marshall, *Spiritual Intelligence*, op.cit, p.10

⁴⁰ Hay, op cit, pp.48-9

The biological approach is not without its problems. The main charge made against it is that of reductionism, namely, there is the danger that spirituality is reduced to nothing but the product of the body's neurological processes and genetic make-up. Reductionism is not so much evident in the work of Hay but in that of some of the neuroscientists that have pioneered the mapping of the brain's structures and functions and hypothesized that humans may be 'hard-wired' for spirituality and belief in god.⁴¹ Yet the biological approach is not in and of itself necessarily reductionist. As Helminiak and others have pointed out, the recent scientific evidence supporting a biological view of spirituality first and foremost demonstrates that spirituality is a human characteristic rather than some non-human metaphysical construct. As one critic of the reductionist strand within the biological approach put it:

For the first time in human history we are beginning to understand spiritual experience not as something apart from the physical human but rather bound up with human matter, i.e. the matter of the brain. Thus, matter and spirit are no longer seen to be opposed but are indeed mutually related, if not one and the same.⁴²

Or to put it more colloquially, 'we have ears because there is something to hear, eyes because there is something to see and a structure relating to spiritual experience because there is something to experience'.⁴³ It matters little for our purposes whether we choose to see the essence of spirituality from a materialist perspective (that all processes can ultimately be accounted for by physical laws) or from a vitalist perspective (that life processes also contain nonmaterial elements that cannot be explained entirely by physical and chemical phenomena). What matters, as David Hay says, is that there is something there and that something is making itself increasingly heard!

Spirituality and business/organizations

If spirituality is a biological and innate human trait then it should be amenable to empirical investigation, not only at the level of the individual, but at the level of organizations and society in general. As Hay has argued:

I assert that in any human group, whether it be a nation, a city, a church, a voluntary organization or a business corporation, the quality of life depends on the degree to which relational consciousness (spiritual and ethical awareness) is diffused through the community.⁴⁴

At the individual level, a group of Finnish researchers for instance, have developed and validated a scaled item questionnaire – the Spiritual Sensitivity Scale – based explicitly on Hay's three aspects of relational

⁴¹ See Rene Muller, 'Neurotheology: Are we hardwired for God?' *Psychiatric Times*, 25(6), May 2008, for a review of this argument.

⁴² I. Delio, 'Are we wired for God?', *New Theological Review*, 16, 2003, pp.31-43.

⁴³ John Swinton, 'Why Psychiatry needs spirituality', Paper presented to the Royal College of Psychiatrists AGM, Edinburgh, 2005, p.2

⁴⁴ David Hay, 'Quality of life/quality of management: the importance of relational consciousness', *European Business Review*, 16(4), 2004

consciousness (awareness, mystery and value sensing).⁴⁵ Zohar and Marshall's principles of spiritual intelligence and Cloninger's self-transcendence scale, albeit developed independently of Hay's work, are also informed by concepts remarkably similar to relational consciousness. Forthcoming work will show how these insights and tools can be helpful in the study and practice of the type of leadership that will be required for managing organizations in the emerging world view.

At the institutional level, organizations are increasingly important as places and spaces of and for the development of community. As Sandra Waddock argues, 'developing community [in organizations] is an exercise of spirituality'.⁴⁶ In discussing the need for organizations to adopt more holistic and integrative management practices that develop community and connectedness, she also draws implicitly on concepts similar to relational consciousness.

Similarly, an influential study on spirituality in the workplace defined workplace spirituality as the 'recognition that employees have an inner life which nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work taking place in the context of community.'⁴⁷ The three core components of the survey the authors developed to gauge spirituality in the workplace included: 1) The inner life (recognising that employees have a spiritual element); 2) Meaningful work (recognizing that employees want to be involved in work that gives meaning to their lives); and 3) Community (recognizing employees need to connect with each other at work). In fact, workplaces and organizations should be places where spirituality thrives and is nourished, for they are (or should be) networks of relationships (between people and people and their organizations) and that is what relational consciousness at its simplest is all about. Hay has in fact stated quite emphatically that 'relational consciousness is diametrically opposed to individualism'.⁴⁸ Conventional images of spirituality tend to conjure up the lone, isolated individual sitting in a state of meditation or prayer. This may have a place but biological spirituality is also about the process and nature of *relationship* and relationship is integral to business and organization.

It is not in the scope of this paper to delve into the steadily growing literature on spirituality and the workplace and/or organization, but merely to have set some conceptual and definitional frameworks that will inform the broader project of how spirituality can inform a deeper and more substantive understanding of corporate responsibility and organizational leadership and suggest that taking a biological view of spirituality provides that starting point.

⁴⁵ Tirri Kirsi, Petri Nokelainen, & Martin Ubani, 'Conceptual Definition and Empirical Validation of the Spiritual Sensitivity Scale', *Journal of Empirical Theology*, 19(1), 2006, pp. 37-62.

⁴⁶ Sandra A Waddock, 'Linking community and spirit: a commentary and some propositions', *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 12(4), 1999, pp. 332-344.

⁴⁷ D.P. Ashmos & D. Duchon, 'Spirituality at work: A conceptualization and measure', *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 9(2), 2000, pp.134-45.

⁴⁸ Hay, 2004, op.cit.

Conclusion

This paper is the first of several that will examine the intersection of spirituality and business. It focused on conceptual and definitional issues surrounding the term spirituality and suggested that part of the confusion and difficulty in defining spirituality is that traditionally spirituality and religion have been used synonymously.

It also outlined the polarization of views that has occurred more recently between spirituality and religion and the attempts to reach reconciliation between them. Three main disciplinary approaches (theological, psychological and biological) were identified that have attempted to reconcile religion and spirituality and in the process outline what they see as an 'appropriate' definition of spirituality.

It was argued that the biological view offers the best starting point for examining spirituality in the context of business and organizations. In brief, the biological view sees spirituality as:

- A separate and biologically prior concept to religion and provides a synthesizing framework for the concepts without necessarily polarizing them;
- Being expressed primarily through the notion of 'relational consciousness';
- A unique and innately human trait, one that is physiologically determined and with both secular and theist expressions.

The sequel to this paper will examine the factors that are driving the increasing interest in spirituality at an individual, organizational and societal level.

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