The challenge of blending spirituality with organisational demands

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Ontological oscillation

- Karl Weick "if people have multiple identities and deal with multiple realities, why should we expect them to be ontological purists ?" (1995:35)

- Questions of being and doing are "alive" in the management and research literature as well as those on a spiritual quest on the nature of Human Beings

- Tavistock Institute theoretical and research perspectives offer a way of thinking about the human being in context that could be seen to straddle both worlds

- Group Relations/systems psychodynamics in particular, could offer a framework for thinking about Spirituality and Organisation

Humans everywhere

- Class
- Culture
- Ethnicity
- Identities
- Faith & Spirituality

- Social Structures
- Social meaning
- Belief structures
- Organising for meaning
- Edies

A paradox

- Growing interest in spiritual dimension in mainstream organisations

- Seen as strengthening ethical principles, staff wellbeing, social responsibility and sustainability (enriching work experience)

But

- Spiritual and religious organisations can suffer organisational and ethical failures that leave followers damaged, disillusioned, disengaged, and/or impoverished

The term 'spiritual'?

- 'Spirituality' is not so much a unitary concept as a signpost for a range of touchstones: our search for meaning, our sense of the sacred, the value of compassion, the experience of transcendence, the hunger for transformation'

- The value of the term spiritual is that it gives permission to speak of things that are unknowable'

- *From RSA report 'Spiritualise: revitalising spirituality to address 21st century challenges':*
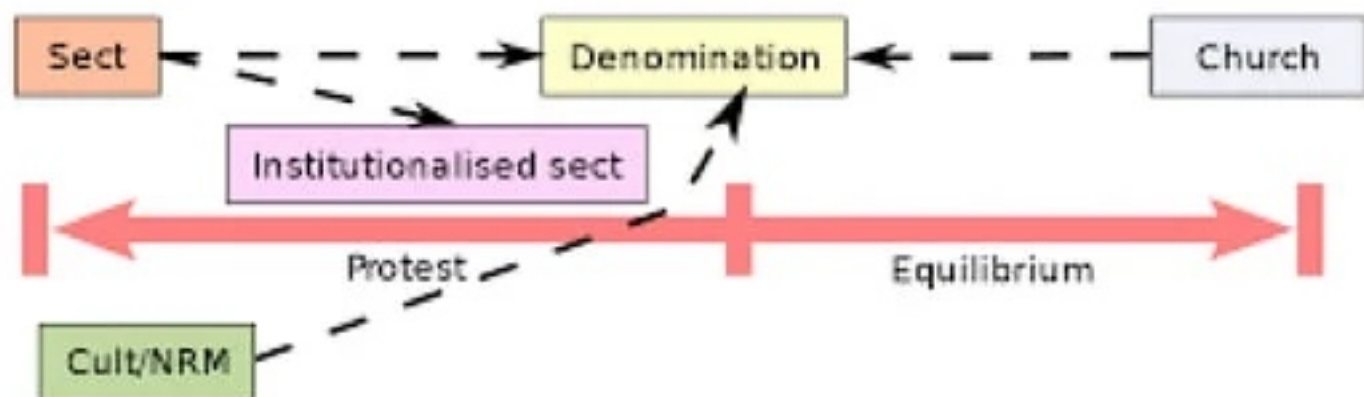
Wide range of organisations with a 'spiritual' dimension

- Traditional 'churches' and church related organisations

- 'New Religious movements' (may specifically seek to challenge mainstream culture)

- 'Mission based' organisations underpinned by spiritual principles and values

The Church-sect continuum

'Spiritual' organisations often lack interest in organisational dimension

'We do things differently'.....challenging mainstream 'norms'

'We're not an organisation, we are a........'

- Family
- Community
- Movement

'We don't need......

- Leaders
- Structures
- Ethical policies and procedures
- Training

Trust in Allah, but tie up your camel

The Prophet Muhammad (SAW)

'God/Spirit/Universe/Being will take care of it ....'

Difficulties experienced by 'spiritual' and faith based organisations

500 + profiles on World Religions and Spirituality website

https://wrldrels.org/

- Leadership and succession

- Splinter groups

- Ethical lapses

- Continuity v change - adaptation of original message/vision

- Fluctuations in size - rapid expansion and contraction

- Becoming 'mainstream' and overly bureaucratic

External threats:

- Attacks from 'anti cult' movements, medical, scientific, legal and political communities and other religious and spiritual groups

- Accusations of fraud, unethical behaviour,

Why ethical failure looms large

- Failings more evident and shocking because of contradiction with teaching
- Gets a lot of media coverage
- Often blamed on flawed (charismatic) individuals rather than organisational failure

But many organisational risks:
- Lack of interest in organisation/structure
- Lack of ethical policies and processes
- Tension between spiritual and material
- Spiritual bypassing
- Ignoring the shadow side

Charismatic leadership

Weber's three types of authority – legal, traditional and charismatic

Charismatic leadership a strong feature of New Religious Movements (but also present in main stream churches, denominations, sects – and mission based organisations)

Advantages :
- Emotional appeal
- Positive impact/capacity for change
- Creates shared identity

Risks
- Leaders become addicted to charisma
- Organisation becomes addicted to charisma
- 'Power 'corrupts' (or is misused)
- Small central group/strong hierarchy (guru centric)
- Lack of challenge/structures to keep them in check
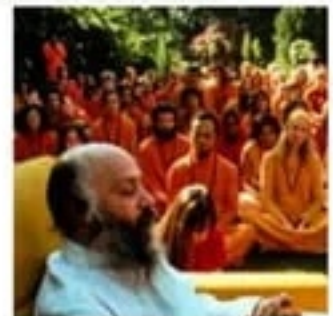
STD's
(Spiritually transmitted diseases)

- Fast food spirituality: offering instant enlightenment
- Faux spirituality: donning spiritual clothes
- Confused motivations: wanting to belong, be loved
- Identifying with spiritual experiences: lack of integration of spiritual insights
- Spiritualised ego: 'its all about me'
- Mass production of spiritual teachers: immature teachers
- Spiritual pride: Feeling spiritually superior
- Group mind: co dependence and lack of challenge
- The chosen people complex: we are the greatest!

- Marianne Caplan (2009)
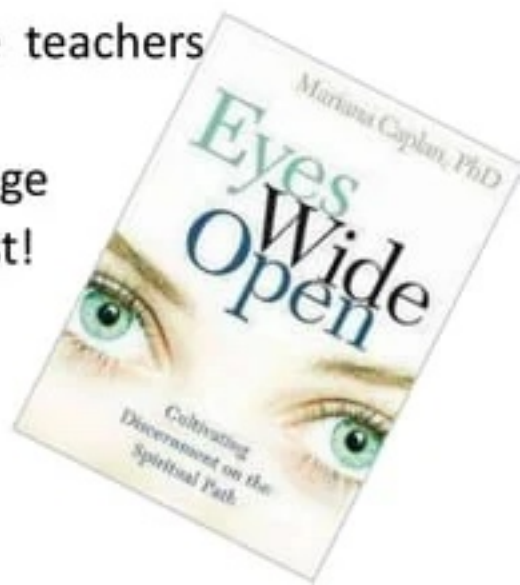
Tension
between spiritual and practical

- The highly spiritual have difficulty with the practical
- The highly practical have difficulty with spiritual

'Some spiritual institutions have attempted to create formal charters of ethnics to minimize spiritual abuses, but such movement can also have a stifling effect on teachers whose job it is to support the practitioners to personally access the wild, unbounded mystery of creation, and can sometimes create safety at the expense of creativity and freedom among practitioners'
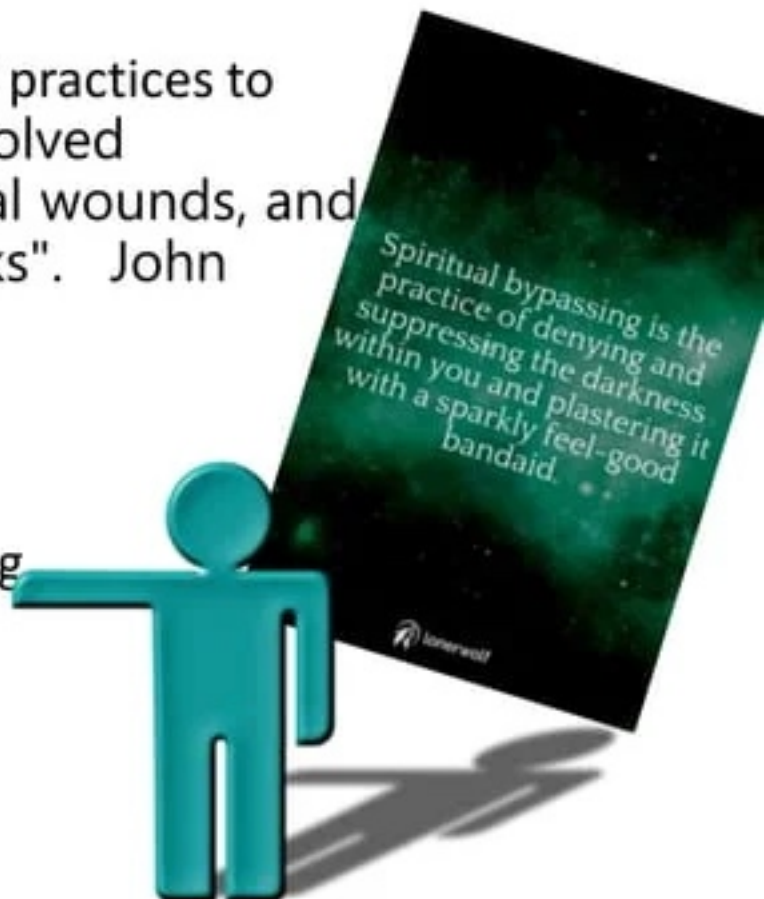
Marianne Caplan (2009)

Challenges

Spiritual bypassing :

"Tendency to use spiritual ideas and practices to sidestep or avoid facing unresolved emotional issues, psychological wounds, and unfinished developmental tasks".   John Welwood

Ignoring the shadow side:

Focusing on the positive and uplifting while ignoring hidden, repressed, shameful or guilt laden aspects of human nature

Spiritual bypassing is the practice of denying and suppressing the darkness within you and plastering it with a sparkly feel-good bandaid.

lonerwolf

Limited support for organisations with spiritual dimension

A growing number of books and trainings taking a 'spiritual' perspective to mainstream organisations <u>but</u>

- Mainstream organisational theory /practice inaccessible to spiritual organisations (language, format, in journals not widely re̶

- May take too 'rational' or 'business related' approach to organisational life

- Seen as missing more salient spiritual and emotional dimensions
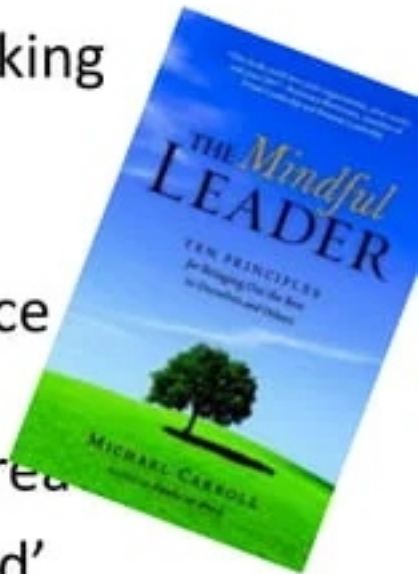
Interviews, focus groups and workshops with wide range of spiritual organisations looking at challenges, how they have addressed these and with what outcome

Based on three hopeful hypotheses:

- Organisation challenges relatively predictable (so not necessarily cause for shame and guilt, or be covered up)
- Resources are available – but perhaps not from mainstream OD sources
- Challenges can be a crucible for spiritual and personal growth

Providing better resources

- 'Tailored' to specific concerns – and language – of spiritual organisations
- Paying more attention to spiritual, emotional, unconscious and paradoxical elements
- Introducing new ideas on leadership and authority e.g. Holacracy, Agile working, servant leadership, feminist leadership styles
- Using appropriate processes and tools: e.g. Theory U process, group relations ……
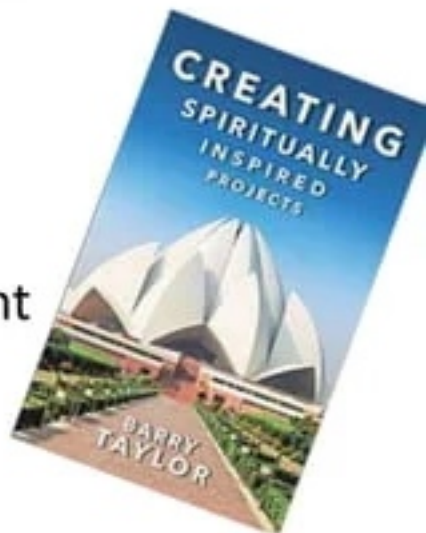
Hierarchy

Holarchy

A Revisit of Bion & Freud?

- Group as a Whole: a Tavistock Institute USP (?)
- (Re)Telling a "spiritual" story of psychoanalysis not just for the Jungians
- (Elaborate) on mystic nuances of Bion's legacy An intense beam of Darkness: Grotstein
- Revisit Gordon Lawrence 'Tonged with Fire' and 'Surprise the Soul'
- Dialectic between Foucault and Goffmann
- Bruce Reed & The Grubb Institute: a Tavistock Legacy?
- Current work/conversations with:
  - Finland Church
  - Church of England Synod
  - Westminster Institute
  - Love@Work: Leicester Conference 2019
  - Pilgrim Centre, Glastonbury