

Critics and Crusaders 30 years on: Is Workplace Spirituality inherently ‘good’?

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Abstract

This paper presents a systematic review of the workplace spirituality literature as characterised by two factions which we have called the Crusaders and the Critics. The Crusaders are seen as authors whose work is clearly aimed at promoting the notion of workplace spirituality academically and in practice. The Critics are those who are, at the least, more reticent and calling for caution. The literature suggests very clear lines of demarcation between these two factions over about a 30 year period beginning in the 1990's and identifies three themes in the bulk of the 'crusader' contributions which we have labelled as follows: functional and managerial, dualistic and reified. By way of comparison, these three themes were then compared with the results of an ethnographic study of self-sustaining spirituality communities (Buddhist and Benedictine) (Brown, 2009), and it was noted how these three themes are the antithesis of organisations with a spiritual *raison d'être* to aspire too. The paper concludes by arguing that the field known as workplace spirituality is unlikely to develop and/or contribute to management discourse in the absence of a clear attempt to address the issues noted in the three themes.

Introduction

Workplace spirituality has gained increased interest in recent years and this interest can be characterised by two factions. The first faction, which we note as the crusaders, has largely viewed workplace spirituality as 'a good thing' with contributions promoting workplace spirituality uncritically and referring to 'our movement' (Steingard, 2005), and other

contributions seemingly assuming workplace spirituality is a priori ‘good’, for example (Wagner-Marsh & Conley, 1999). The second faction, which we denote as the critics, have viewed workplace spirituality with more reticence and call for caution. Although a considerable body of research has been developed, less attention has been paid to the critical element of workplace spirituality and its conceptual, theoretical and practical development. Accordingly, following a critical review of the workplace spirituality literature the paper moves to provide a future research agenda based on the distillation of three central themes which are the antithesis of organisations with a spiritual *raison d’etre* to aspire too. This, we would argue would enable workplace spirituality to contribute to the wider management discourse. Using a systematic review methodology, this paper begins by examining the crusader literature starting in 1996 (Brandt, 1996) and examines definitions, benefits and the implementation of workplace spirituality. Next, we examine the crusader literature through a more critical lens and identify three themes in the crusader contributions which we have labeled as functional and managerial, dualistic and reified. Finally, we compare the themes identified in the literature noted above to an ethnographic study on self-sustaining spiritual communities (Brown, 2009). We note how the three themes identified through the crusader literature are the antithesis of organisations with a spiritual *raison d’etre*. Accordingly, we conclude the paper by suggesting that the field of workplace spirituality is unlikely to contribute in any meaningful way to management discourse in the absence of a clear attempt to address the issues noted..

The crusaders

Defining workplace spirituality

In 1999 *The Journal of Organizational Change Management* devoted a special issue to the subject of workplace spirituality and Freshman (1999: 319) asks, '*What are people writing about when they refer to spirituality in the workplace?*'. She concludes that workplace spirituality is uniquely personal, that dialogue is better than debate, and that intuition and learning are key themes. Others, however, list what workplace spirituality might include. Kriger and Hanson (1999) suggest eight underlying values drawn from the major religions, including honesty and truthfulness, humility, trust, forgiveness, compassion and thankfulness. Similarly, Wagner-Marsh and Conley (1999) suggest six key concepts based on the literature that appear to be essential for maintaining a spiritually based corporate culture: honesty with self, articulation of the organisation's spiritually based philosophy, mutual trust and honesty with others, commitment to equality and service, commitment to employees and selection of personnel to match the corporations spiritually-based philosophy. Delbecq (1999) considers themes which inform Christian business leaders' journeys and include a sense of leadership as a calling and co-creation of industrial enterprise as an act of love. In his analysis there is no separation of the private life of the spirit and the public life of work, the leader is a 'contemplative in action' and is characterised as having courage, bold vision, flexibility and the Christian virtue of humility.

Milliman *et al.*, (1999) presents Southwest Airlines as an example of a spiritually based organisation because it has strong emphasis on community, and because employees feel they are empowered and part of a cause. Ashmos and Duchon (2000:139) and their three-dimensional framework defines workplace spirituality as '*recognition of an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community*'.

These attempts to define workplace spirituality did not satisfy some who called for a tighter definition to make the field more pragmatic (Gibbons, 2002). The problem being the

attempt to define spirituality itself is too restricting. Echoing Gibbons' call for a more pragmatic approach, Pava (2004) suggests that intelligent spirituality would be human centered and it would see 'meaning' as potentially intrinsic to all human activity. Spirituality in a business context, Pava suggests, is better presented in a pragmatic manner and by way of an underlying philosophy suggests the work of John Dewey (1934).

The attempt to find a definition of spirituality at work has continued, more predominantly by empirical means. Kinjerski and Skrypnek (2004), for example, developed the 'spirit at work scale' (SAWS) which has had a considerable impact in moving workplace spirituality research forward (Neal, 2018). Most notably, they find the notion of spirit at work is, for their respondents, a multidimensional state which includes the physical and the interpersonal as well as the mystical. Marques (2006: 43) identified a number of features of what should (e.g. ethics, truth, trust) and should not be present (e.g. negativity, dishonesty) in a spiritual workplace.

The preponderance of lists of qualities dating from Kriger and Hanson (1999) to Neal (2018) suggests that there are still difficulties with the clear definitions that Gibbons (2002) called for. Brown (2003) considers the reified nature of the term organisational spirituality unhelpful and Benefiel (2007) seemingly moves the discussion on to how workplace spirituality might best be researched, yet she still found the need to ask questions relating to how spirituality in organisations can be defined. Gotsis and Kortezi (2007: 575) conclude that, '*...the field is full of obscurity and imprecision for the researcher, the practitioner, the organisational analysts and whoever attempts to systematically approach this relatively new inquiry field*'. Attempts, therefore, to define workplace spirituality, either from a theoretical or empirical base, continue to struggle.

The benefits of workplace spirituality

Much writing on the subject of workplace spirituality has been devoted to detailing the benefits to either the organisation as a whole, or to the individuals within it, but what is noticeable is that benefits are seen mostly to accrue to the organisation and, with only a few exceptions, to the individual, who usually benefits collaterally. Many refer to the benefits of a more spiritual workplace in terms of its impact on the performance of the company (see Pietersen, 2014, for a substantial review) or the extrinsic utilitarian value of it (Gibbons, 2002). Dent, Higgins and Wharff (2005) find that most researchers in the field have either demonstrated empirically or have hypothesised, that there is a link between workplace spirituality and productivity.

One reason that the organisational benefits are placed ahead of those of individuals is that offered by Milliman *et al.*, (1999: 222):

“We believe that the issue of whether spirituality can have a positive impact on both employees and organizations is particularly important because many chief executive officers (CEO’s) will not justify a practice unless it favourably impacts the bottom line”.

Lloyd (1990) was able to report that spiritual companies outperform non-spiritual companies by 86% and Neck and Milliman (1994) suggested that organisations which provide their employees with avenues for spiritual expression are likely to perform better. Butts (1999: 329) argues that ‘*ultimate whole system values*’, including truth, trust, freedom, justice, creativity, collective harmony, intelligence, deeper meaning and higher purpose, ‘*...can also enhance profit and productivity.*

Konz and Ryan (1999) note how individuals that join a spiritually based organization, and share its values, will stay longer, be more satisfied, more productive and are more easily socialized. People are more engaged, responsible, ethical, collaborative and creative and the improved quality and innovation affords the organisation competitive advantage (Gull and Doh, 2004).

Empirical work has also shown that employees relate success in work to the notion of spirituality (Harrington, Preziosi and Gooden, 2001). Rego and Pina de Cunha (2008) found that the experience of workplace spirituality gives rise to a greater feeling of attachment to the organisation, even obligation and loyalty, which the authors say can ultimately be translated into improved organisational and individual performance.

The benefit to the organisation is also seen in terms of facilitating change. For Dehler and Welsh (1994) downsizing and re-engineering are not improving organisational performance and therefore structural approaches to change are only part of the solution. They argue that we need to address emotional and spiritual issues too; spirituality, they say, is the thread connecting non-rational dimensions of human behaviour which are seen as essential to the change process.

For Neal *et al.*, (1999) transformation at both the individual and the organisational level is more closely aligned to the spiritual and the non-material, than to economics. When a critical mass is achieved in individual transformations, she argues, so a society wide transformation will take place via organisational transformation.

A further connection is made between spiritual perspectives and the learning process in organisations (Addleson, 1996). Howard (2002) argues that focus on spirituality has allowed practitioners to consider many issues related to learning in the workplace, such as complexity, connectivity, the meaning of work, individual identity and moral leadership. Spirituality is even

being mentioned in the context of financial decision making (McCuddy and Pirie, 2007) and customer relations (Pandey *et al.*, 2009).

In one of few contributions outside the USA, Gibbons (2002) is clear about the order in which the benefits of a more spiritual workplace should accrue: first to the individual who is enabled to integrate work and spiritual life; and second to the families and communities who he says are nourished and contented; and finally to the employers who will benefit from greater productivity and act in more ethical ways through being socially active and more environmentally responsible.

Others that allude in some way to the benefits of workplace spirituality to the individual include Fairholm (1996) who sees the workplace as an arena for individuals to find spiritual fulfilment. Mirvis (1997) sees the proliferation of company training programmes, in for example team-building, as evidence that they are beginning to rediscover work as having spiritual ends for the individual. Harrington (1998) states the need is for boardroom decisions to focus on respect for the individual, and Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003) argue from their empirical work, that the individual's spirituality influences their perception of ethical practice within the organisation. Workplace spirituality is also held to make people more tolerant of diversity and of their own failure which makes them less susceptible to stress. They are also more altruistic leading to better citizenship as well as fostering greater commitment to the organisation and work group (Mohamed, *et al.*, 2004).

Implementing workplace spirituality

The preceding section demonstrates that many contributions point to these benefits as a way of justifying the work. However, another major thread of the workplace spirituality literature addresses how this might be implemented via management and leadership. For some

this would appear as premature with the philosophical underpinnings as yet not fully worked through (Gotsis and Kortezi, 2007).

The question arises **who** is to implement the spiritual workplace? For many authors it is clear that this is a management or a leadership function or at least has important implications for leadership theory (Cacioppe, 2000). Brandt (1996) (in Wagner-Marsh and Conley, 1999: 294) in regards to spirituality in one organisation says '*...and the firm expects to extend this emphasis to lower levels in the organisation in the near future*', and Gull and Doh (2004: 128) '*...propose some concrete actions managers can take...*'.

The idea that it is a management function is also clear in this quotation from Konz and Ryan (1999:201) '*No transformation is easy, especially one as significant as the role shift from manager to spiritual guide*'. Vaill (2000) points out that people working in organisations are meaning seeking by their nature, and this means it is a concern for all people in management and leadership positions.

Fry (2003) argues that leadership is a matter of calling and leaders must engage with their own core values and communicate those to others through personal action and Zohar and Marshall (2000) argue that for leaders to inspire vision in their companies they need to give attention to social and spiritual capital as well as material capital. Smith and Rayment (2007) offer guidance to leaders in how they can negotiate the complexities of spirituality. The suggestion appears to be that leading from a spiritual mindset is something that can be taught, in much the same way as, for example, a course on team-building can be taught. Marques (2006) argues that while the establishment of a spiritual transformation in the workplace is easier at higher level employees, it can be done for lower employees, but may take longer and require more perseverance. This shows a very managerial and even patronising attitude to the spiritual

aspirations some people have, and it also implies that spirituality is currently absent from companies. Again, this point will be addressed below.

Pawar (2009) notes the benefits to the individual or organisation as two separate, yet related ways in which workplace spirituality can be facilitated. Walsh and Vaughan (1993) (in Butts 1999:330) says that implementation will require six essential elements,

“ethical training, development of concentration, emotional transformation; redirection of motivation from egocentric, deficiency-based needs to higher motives such as self-transcendence, refinement of awareness and the cultivation of wisdom”.

The link between spirituality and performance is best made, says Milliman (1999), through the empowerment of individuals and the alignment of HR practices to the spiritual values of the organisation.

Wagner-Marsh and Conley (1999) suggest spiritually based firms should put their underlying philosophy first and develop a distinctive awareness of the spirituality of the company and clearly articulate it. In addition ‘*outplaced people*’ should be looked after. Also, ‘*New people are given a mentor who helps nurture the servant leadership attitude*’ Wagner-Marsh and Conley (1999: 299). Similarly, Konz and Ryan (1999: 202) argue that because managers will bring a variety of spiritual traditions to the workplace, organisations should develop ‘*specific spiritualities*’ in order that potential employees can choose whether they want to join it based on its spirituality. This element of choice could be viewed as value-based eugenics at work, but few people enjoy the financial independence that would be necessary to choose a job based on the spiritual orientation of the company. This, it seems, is aimed at senior management, and not most employees.

Marques (2006: 890) says that implementing workplace spirituality will require *'thinking outside the box'*, and elsewhere provides a 'protocol' (Marques, 2008) for workplace spirituality, and thereby reinforces her view that, *'religion should definitely be kept out of the picture'*. The view that implementing workplace spirituality is a management function is substantiated by the idea that achieving this involves training managers. Boozer (1998) and others suggest themes and important questions which can be used to begin the dialogue with managers as to what workplace spirituality is, for example, Daniels, Franz and Wong (2000), Harlos (2000), Epstein (2002). The evidence is that this has already begun, for example, Mirvis (1997), Haroutiounian, et al (2000), and Marcic (2000). Bento (2000) pointed out that while leading from within cannot be taught it nevertheless needs to be learned. The contradictions inherent in learning that which cannot be taught have also been addressed by Lips-Wiersma (2004).

Karakas et al (2009) see the implementation of workplace spirituality as emerging from an enhanced role for consultants who, among other roles are encouraged to see themselves as spiritual visionaries in their interventions.

Pielstick (2005) suggests that tomorrow's business leaders would do well to consider their own spiritual practices, but there is still little mention of the need for those that enter the workplace spirituality discourse to share their own spiritual search. Helpfully Kernocham, McCormick and White (2007) point to the need for those that are engaged in teaching management from a spiritual perspective to consider their own spiritual path (in this case Buddhist), such reflexivity is not common in the literature and only a few have given voice to their own spiritual search while discussing workplace spirituality, for example Delbecq (2004) and De la Garza (2004).

The critics

The previous section explores the workplace spirituality literature with little critical comment giving the impression that most contributors are either in favour of the broad thrust of the initiative or at least writing in a descriptive manner. There have, however, been a minority of critical voices that offer a note of caution from the beginning, which we refer to here as the critics (e.g. Adlam, 1991, Polley, Vora and Subba Narasimha, 2005, Bell, 2008, and Case and Gosling, 2010). In the following critique, we examine the crusader literature through a more critical lens and identify three themes in the bulk of the crusader contributions which we have labeled as functional and managerial, dualistic and reified.

Functional and managerial

Many writers justify their work by reference to the benefits that might accrue to the organisation from developing more spirituality-oriented workplaces. This utilitarian orientation has been criticised by Gibbons (2002) and it has also been identified from a psychoanalytic perspective, as deriving from the ‘empty speech’ of the ego, rather than the search for a fully integrated and fulfilled individual in the workplace (Driver, 2005). The ‘business case’ for workplace spirituality has also been a more recent focus of criticism from others too, for example (Poole, 2009).

Manipulation and control

One of the most frequently mentioned concerns is that focussing on the ‘business case’ may lead to the manipulation of employees (Case and Gosling, 2010) and to discrimination (Bell and Taylor 2004). Both Cavanagh (1999) and Hicks (2002), while broadly in favour of the idea of more spiritually accommodating workplaces, note the possibility that it will become an arena

for fanaticism and favouritism. Tourish and Pinnington (2002) express concern for what they refer to as the '*unholy trinity*' of transformational leadership, corporate cultism and the spirituality paradigm. Lips-Wiersma *et al.*, (2009), provide a critical discussion on the dark side of workplace spirituality and note two potentially negative organizational dimensions of workplace spirituality, namely control and instrumentality.

One problem with workplace spirituality is that it would be necessary to initiate this in a culturally diverse workforce. Sheep (2006) identifies the problems of a managerially prescribed notion of spirituality in such a workplace, and these considerations also give rise to difficult legal issues (Cash, Gray and Rood, 2000). There are instances of people taking legal action alleging unwanted interference in their belief systems as a result of the transformational agenda (Singer and Lalich, 1995). Ackers and Preston (1997) point out that management development programmes have taken on the character of an **actual** religion rather than borrowing from religion and using its constructs metaphorically. Such programmes, they say, attempt to 'convert' and 'transform' managers in much the same way as charismatic religions do. Laabs (1995) points out that some are hoping people will move from '*it's just a job*' to '*this is my mission*'. Others suggest that people actually want to express their workplace spirituality, but fear offending peers and management (Lewis and Geroy, 2000, Vaill, 1991, and Mitroff and Denton, 1999).

In terms of outcomes, the possibility that the workplace spirituality initiative might become discriminatory and manipulative has its opposite too, namely that it might become a set of platitudes. Milliman and Ferguson *et al* (1999: 230), write that it is, '*...not enough merely to integrate spirituality into the mission statement. Instead these ideas need to be woven into business strategies and practices*'. Gull and Doh (2004) point out that workplace spirituality

cannot be achieved by simplistic, superficial platitudes, but must focus on the individual unfolding.

Workplace spirituality is in danger of proceeding as if it were another management technique and as such presents itself as a piece of software to be 'installed'. However, while the gestation period of management techniques is long, (Gill and Whittle, 1992) in workplace spirituality the *'How to ...'* books have already begun (Fairholm, 1997). Web sites abound, and some of the more cautious ask if this is the next management fad destined ultimately to nestle inconspicuously next to Scientific Management (Taylor, 1911), MBO, (Drucker, 2007) and Re-engineering (Hammer and Champy, 2001). Stephen Pattison's book, *'The Faith of the Managers'* (1997) perhaps hints at something similar; managers have clung to different facets of the *'myth of management'* (Bowles, 1997) for about 100 years and now, having clung to everything from *'Scientific Management'* to *'reengineering'*, they are now offered *'spirituality at work'*.

The managerial emphasis

The claim that a more spiritual workplace is likely to contribute to organisational performance, leads to the almost automatic assumption that it must be the preserve of practicing managers and academics. Linking spirituality to management value systems is not a recent observation, (see Pascale and Athos, (1981) for example). The idea is implicit in Konz and Ryan (1999: 203); *'The spirituality of the leader is the key to maintaining the organisation's spirituality'*, primarily through the decisions on who to employ.

The idea that workplace spirituality is something management does, or should do, is apparent with a number of authors (e.g. Gull and Doh, 2004). But, seeming to offer an

alternative, Marques (2005) asserts that while some workplaces are just not susceptible to a spiritual mindset, it is nevertheless possible for spirituality to be established by workers, as opposed to management. However, the author goes on to reveal a similar top-down orientation saying that while spiritual transformation in the workplace is easier at higher levels, achievement at lower levels, *'takes longer and needs greater perseverance'*. This echoes a point made nine years earlier by Brandt (1996) that spirituality should be extended to the lower levels in the near future.

Marques (2005) demonstrates a similar approach to the implementation of workplace spirituality with surprising candor;

'Implementation of spirituality in the workplace is not happening as smoothly and as rapidly as may have initially been expected'.

This is regarded as *'an unfortunate setback'* (p149). Marques (2005) also refers to John Heider's work on the *Tao of Leadership* (1985), yet while her approach is totally about 'doing' something, virtually every page of Heider's book, developed from Taoist sources, is that the effective leader stands back, waits and 'does' very little; *'Group process evolves naturally. It is self-regulating. Do not interfere. It will work itself out'*, (p115). The impetus to 'do' something with regard to workplace spirituality is endemic to many of the writers in this field. Konz and Ryan (1999), for example, argue that people can determine the spirituality of an organisation in the same way they can influence the mission statement. This is the antithesis to what many would describe as spiritual, (Driver, 2005).

It becomes necessary to ask how a leader in an organisation might bring their spirituality to bear on the organisation. Numerous CEO's have tried, overtly, to articulate religious vision in

organizations including Max Dupree from Herman Miller. Corporate paternalism of this nature can be seen as offensive and intrusive by some people and may well cause discord. Accordingly, Konz and Ryan (1999) argue, the organisation should '*develop specific spiritualities*' in order that potential employees can choose whether to join the organisation or not based on 'its' spirituality. Campbell (1997) has argued in defence of stakeholder capitalism, that organisations should clearly state their values so that potential employees can choose whether or not these values accord with their own. The organisation is then populated by people who have chosen, not the job, but the value system.

In both these cases, while this market-based approach seems laudable, the practice may be problematic. It is possible, though debatable, that people in the senior reaches of an organisation may have the luxury of being able to choose a company based on its value system, but the contention here is that for the majority of people this is likely to be a luxury they believe they cannot afford.

In addition, there is the problem of employees believing too much in the company and finding their loyalty goes unrewarded when times are hard. Porth *et al.*, (1999) argue that the individual needs to make a long-term commitment to the organizational mission and vision, but is it reciprocated? There are examples of this longer-term commitment i.e. beyond employment, being successful (Semler, 1994) for example, and some authors contributing to the workplace spirituality discourse feel that '*outplaced people*' should be looked after, (Wagner-Marsh and Conley, 1999). But if the organisation is run largely to ensure the financial well being of the shareholders, (Friedman, 1979), then the reciprocation may not be present. When the 'chips are down', the non-managerial employee has little power, which has been demonstrably the case since the middle 1980's in the UK.

This demonstrates the problem very well; what a manager, latching onto workplace spirituality, sees as a greater purpose, may not accord with that of the individual worker, who may be manipulated into 'believing' they are engaged with a different greater purpose. This appears to have happened with Enron, many of whose employees were persuaded to invest their life savings in the company (Fox, 2004). But people invest a great deal of themselves in things they believe in and there may be considerable emotional distress experienced by the 'believer' when the organisation moves on to a different 'greater purpose'.

However, while there are those that have tried to bring their spirituality to their leadership roles and others argue it should be confined to the facilitation of employee's spiritual growth, perhaps a more important question is the extent to which leaders are, themselves, emotionally and spiritually mature enough to do either.

The leader's ability to lead will be to a significant extent dependent on their own '*Emotional Intelligence*' (Goleman, 1996 and 1998), and their spiritual maturity too, (Zohar and Marshall, 2000). Judge (1999) points to the 'shadow' of the leader; that part of the person which he or she unconsciously denies and therefore projects onto others. Managers need to confront their own 'shadow', (Bowles, 1991). Denhardt (1981) writes of the need for leaders to be '*heroes of descent*', that is, descent into themselves and Maccoby (1995) points out that the narcissistic ego of the leader has much to answer for. Similarly, for Mitroff (1983) different facets of the mind of individuals are seen as stakeholders and require attention in the organisational context, again indicating that the organisation prospers as individuals mature, and not as a result of the imposition by leaders and managers, the rigours of a journey which they themselves have not trodden.

Extraordinary science?

What the preceding discussion highlights is that for the most part, the workplace spirituality literature presents itself as new and radical. To re-emphasise the point, Steingard (2005: 230), for example, refers to *'the spirituality in business movement'* and in an article entitled *'Yearning for a More Spiritual Workplace'*, Marques (2005) discusses the new insights of workplace spirituality and declares elsewhere that *'A new awareness has been stirring in workers' souls for at least 10 years now'* (Marques, Dhiman and King, 2005: 81).

But others are not so sure that workplace spirituality is as new and as radical as many of its proponents claim (Kennedy, 1999). Quattro (2004) argues that many contributors are reluctant to acknowledge either classical management theory or the religious roots of the inquiry. In terms of classical management theory, for example, Quattro (2004) points out that Mary Parker-Follet had, in 1918, argued that we are often willing to sacrifice income for meaning, and Greenleaf called for 'organisational theology' in 1977. Pawar (2009) more recently pointed to the fundamental organisational behaviour concepts that underpin much of what is being written about under the workplace spirituality banner, such as transformational leadership and organizational citizenship. Maslow (1968) reiterated the responsibility of managers and the organisation to provide work that facilitated self-actualization, and Senge (1990) argued that the learning organisation should be based, among other things, upon the spiritual mastery of the individual, and the confluence of spiritual themes with those of the learning organisation that have already been noted (Porth et al, 1999).

Bell and Taylor (2003) argue persuasively that the workplace spirituality discourse offers no critique of the structural conditions of capitalism and therefore aligns itself with Weber's acceptance of those conditions. *The Protestant Ethic*, (1930) they point out, showed how meaning and virtue were attained within the context of capitalism and the workplace spirituality

discourse is similar. Others have been equally critical of the largely parochial nature of the work so far, ignoring for example, the work to be found in the psychology of religion (Gibbons, 2002), and we would add that it has also been reluctant to examine theological work stretching back centuries, even for help with the foundational idea of what the spiritual life is.

Quattro (2004: 228) argues that the presentation of the literature as new and radical is '*incomplete at best and at worst lacks academic integrity*'. In this reading the literature is perhaps, '*normal science*' not '*extraordinary science*' (Kuhn, 1970) and to borrow from Ralph Stacey (1993) will not lead to '*extraordinary management*', but '*ordinary management*'.

Incommensurable with the dominant paradigm

The attempt to measure spirituality is related to the problems of 'implementing' it in the workplace. The underlying process of strategy is seen to be one of analysing, choosing and implementing followed by assessment of the strategy feeding back into further analysis (Johnson and Scholes, 2008). But in this regard Gibbons (2002) says the problems are threefold; first, there is a rift in the discourse between science and religion, secondly, the techno-economic context within which spirituality has to thrive favours short term financial measures above longer term non-material gain. And thirdly, the emphasis on instant gratification means we measure achievement by reference to our movement up the hierarchy and in material ways.

Capitalist philosophy states that it is the business of business to make profit (Friedman, 1979) and Argenti (1997) put forward some compelling arguments as to why a stakeholder approach to business is not workable. The dominant paradigm includes corporate law; it is the legally binding responsibility of corporate managers to manage the organisation in the interests of the shareholders, to do otherwise is to mismanage the organisation.

This amounts to the incommensurability of the concept of workplace spirituality with the dominant paradigm, a point also made by Benefiel (2003). And Kofodimos (1993: 6) writes; *'Expressing intimacy is incompatible with an organisational context in which mastery, rather than intimacy is usually rewarded'*. This point is also made by Lips-Wiersma and Mills (2001: 7) who contend that people who express spirituality in secular workplaces may have their professionalism questioned. This they characterise as a *'tension between the need to belong and the need to express their individual spirituality'*.

We are faced, in this literature; with the idea that spirituality is 'good', but can it co-exist with the hyper-competitiveness of many people, in many organisations, in many industries, where the dominant metaphor is guerrilla warfare and military strategy? (see Michael Porter for example 1980 and 1985). For many recruiters to highly competitive industries, the talk of 'workplace spirituality' must be incomprehensible. How does an individual salesperson or strategist square aggressive competitive activity with the spirituality that features in this literature?

Dualistic

Assuming spirituality is absent

A further criticism of the workplace spirituality initiative is its dualistic nature and this, it may be argued, is the result of its cultural heritage. Marques (2005: 152) asserts that many organisations are *'unspiritual'* and Dehler and Welsh (1994) see workplace spirituality as potentially succeeding where downsizing and re-engineering have failed. Burack (1999) argues for the importance of the concept for all people in the organisation, particularly those in positions of high influence. Anderson (2000) takes a different tack and points to the cost of not giving due consideration to workplace spirituality including what he refers to as suboptimal decisions. The

implication of this is that ‘spiritual’ is good and ‘unspiritual’ is bad, or that ‘unspiritual organisations’ are not as good as ‘spiritual organisations’. Putting it differently, the literature appears to assume that spirituality is absent from most organisations, but others have been equally clear that this is not the case. Wagner-Marsh and Conley (1999: 297) cite Max DePree former CEO of Herman Miller, *‘I see authenticity as an inherent value, a right, we’re authentic before we get to the workplace’*. For Gull and Doh (2004: 135) *‘One’s life and what one does in life are not to be compartmentalized; life can’t be put on hold while one attends to material want’*.

There are those that argue that spirituality is already present, and that the main issue is not how to ‘introduce’ spirituality but; *‘why do people suppress their beliefs in the workplace?’* (Lips-Wiersma and Mills, 2001: 7). As already noted, many people struggle to express their spiritual views in the workplace and lack of safety is the main reason. There is, the authors say, *‘a tension between the need to belong and the need to express their spirituality’*.

We are, it could be argued, already spiritual and it is our condition, not an academic discovery, nor is it our deficiency and this seems to be something of what Lee (1991: 225) was also saying ten years earlier, as she acknowledges the integrative nature of the spiritual, *‘My feelings of my own spirituality are based upon putting myself behind everything that I do. How can I do that if I am split?’*. This implies the individual cannot speak of workplace spirituality as if it were something we switch on and off depending on where we are and what we are doing.

But why does the workplace spirituality literature largely assume spirituality is absent from organisations? This question draws attention to some complex issues about how much of ‘ourselves’ we leave at home when we go to work. Traditionally, at least in the West, organisations have not even encouraged individuals to express themselves, emotionally, at work,

much less spiritually. Henry Ford demonstrated the ultimate Cartesian split when he reputedly said, *'Why is it that whenever I ask for a pair of hands, a brain comes attached?'* Aided and abetted by the work of Frederick Taylor, Ford set about creating an organisation that engaged the workforce not so much as sub-human, but as partially human, that is, only physical.

Organisations in this sense may be seen to impede, to a greater or lesser extent the reconnection (religio) of individuals to their spiritual nature and workplace spirituality literature needs to re-orientate toward the removal of impediments to the flourishing of what is already there, rather than to the installation of a quasi-radical idea.

Separating spirituality from religion

A further manifestation of the dualistic nature of the literature is the attempt to separate religion from spirituality (Marques, 2005). For purposes of definition, there may be grounds for doing this, but the argument that 'religion should definitely be kept out of the picture' appears to be grounded in the assumption that not only is non-spirituality bad, but so is religion. Tischler et al (2002) says up to now we have avoided discussing workplace spirituality because it might be associated with proselytizing, but the insistence on the word spirituality instead, might be symptomatic of the same fear and the result might be a humanistic stance that seems to bear little connection to the search for the transcendent people often feel. The stipulation also does not acknowledge the point that for most, the religious tradition to which they subscribe is, for them, a spiritual path. Nor does it address the probability that, given time, the workplace spirituality orientation, would itself, accrue the features of any other religious tradition. Excluding religion from the workplace in favour of spirituality may point to considerable naivety regarding human organising tendencies and its attendant shadow, the 'protocol' suggested by Marques (2008) seems testament to that.

Permitting spirituality and prohibiting religion is therefore tantamount to discrimination. This point is made forcefully by Hicks (2002) who argues for '*respectful pluralism*'. It has been argued that the word 'religion' usually means the institutional and is separated from the religious impulse, which is closer to the word spirituality in meaning. While we may be moving away from institutional and collective interpretations in some places, and possibly for good reasons, we are not moving away from the religious impulse, (the spiritual). However, for the reasons discussed here, prohibiting the religious from a place in the conversation may be seen as naive, discriminatory and unnecessary.

More recently, Phipps and Benefiel (2013) have examined six juxtapositions on the relationship between spirituality and religion in order to aid in research design decisions. They note how these six juxtapositions could be seen as problematic for the field of workplace spirituality and offer six propositions for scholars to consider. (e.g. That researchers specify whether they are studying spirituality, religion or both as this can provide clarity and help scholars examine issues underlying the debate).

Reified

A final critical point is that of the reification of the organisation in the workplace spirituality literature, this occurs in a number of ways. Firstly, the literature largely stresses the goals of the organisation, authors write frequently of the influence of a more spiritual workplace on the performance of the organisation, and one executive even argued that his attendance on a retreat was aimed at improving the bottom line of his company (Overell, 1999). Indeed, some pointed to the difficulty of persuading companies to 'implement' 'spirituality at work' initiatives in the absence of these bottom line benefits.

There are many examples of the performance related emphasis (e.g. Butts, 1994; Neck and Milliman 1994). Recurrent issues also include the prescribing of organisational goals and mission statements and definition and measurement (Beazley, 1997; Heaton and Schmidt, 2004; King and Crowther, 2004).

Such emphasis also leads to the assumption that it is the organisation which is spiritual, rather than the individuals within it, which has been questioned by Brown (2003). As a corollary to this, it becomes possible to write 'about' organisational spirituality, rather than 'know' organisational spirituality and write from that direct experience. There are authors working in this field who are reticent about attempts to enunciate the spiritual experience at all (Konz, 1999; Dehler, 1994) and others are cautious about attempts to define it (McCormack, 1994). There is a sense in which the workplace spirituality literature is condemned to talk 'about' the spiritual experience because the agenda appears to be one of operating on something outside of the self. Writers call for more spiritual workplaces but do not appear to examine their own spiritual life; intellectual activity is, in this sense, separate from the subject matter.

The question of whether a collective can be spiritual is a difficult one, but it might be illuminated by asking whether an organisation can be anything in this sense. Can an organisation be happy? Can an organisation be constructive or destructive? Can it be environmentally friendly? It is suggested that it is not an organisation that is these things, but the individuals within it, and abstracting 'the organisation' deflects attention from the very human actions that take place within its context. Individuals are happy and sad and individuals are constructive and destructive. In conclusion, reification of the organisation might signal a problem when discussing workplace spirituality

Discussion - Workplace spirituality and future directions

The above-mentioned literature has been compared to empirical work conducted by Brown (2009) in which the experiences of people working in two self-sustaining spiritual communities, (Buddhist and Benedictine) were explored. We believe there is value in exploring spiritually oriented communities which enables us to draw on the spiritual dimension, vision and central ethos of communities that have existed for many centuries. These communities are spiritually orientated, but as Brown (2009) notes they are nonetheless human communities and exhibit most of the problems any organisation might experience. However, they have developed ways of working with these issues that can make a considerable contribution to the current workplace spirituality conversation. The purpose of this discussion section, therefore, is to identify the key features of spiritually oriented communities as revealed by Brown (2009) and compare them to the three themes identified earlier in the critics literature.

The following is a summary of the findings from Brown's 2009 study:

1. People in these self-sustaining spiritual communities aspire to a non-dualistic experience of life which seeks to integrate all its aspects.
2. People in these self-sustaining spiritual communities consciously engage with symbol and ritual as a means by which the individual might achieve spiritual growth in communion with others.
3. People in these self-sustaining spiritual communities seek direct experience of reality, (however it is referred to) by focussing on people and the present moment.

These observations contrast with a significant proportion of the workplace spirituality writing reviewed here which:

1. Has a dualistic orientation that separates management from workers, the spiritual from the religious and the spiritual from the non-spiritual.
2. Does not address the role of symbol and ritual in its discourse.
3. Reifies the 'spiritual organisation' by focussing on abstract goals and the future attainment of those goals, as well as treating workplace spirituality as an intellectual exercise rather than a lived experience.

The non-dualistic aspiration

Whatever terms we might use to refer to the oneness of life as opposed to duality, our organisations continue to require of us a separation and partiality, a fragmentation of the self as identified by others, (Marx, 1963 and Fromm, 1994), that is antithetical to the spiritual endeavour, and it is this non-dualism that we feel should be addressed in the discourse known as workplace spirituality. Work in a spiritual place is not a set of compartmentalised activities, even though they take place at different and prescribed times of the day, month and year, in short, work **is** a spiritual activity.

The conscious engagement with symbol and ritual

A second observation from Brown's 2009 study is the recognition of conscious engagement with symbol and ritual in order to achieve the aims of the individuals in the community. The notions of symbol and ritual as vehicles to further spiritual growth in the

individual are almost totally absent from the literature reviewed and yet central to the participants in Brown's study.

The non-reified organisation

A further contribution from Brown's (2009) work reveals the potential for a non-reified organisation. There is, he finds, a clear intention to focus attention on people rather than abstractions such as organisational goals. They also focus attention on the present rather than the future. The focus is also on direct experience of life rather than intellectual knowledge of it, and on the meaning of the organisation to individuals rather than on the formal purpose of it.

Such orientation appears quite different from conventional commercial organisations which focus extensively on abstractions, intellect, formal purpose and on the future. Contemporary language reifies the organisation by the use of such phrases as '*the organisation needs*', '*wants*', '*has*', '*believes*', and '*feels*', yet the organisation is not a thinking, feeling, sensing entity, but an abstraction which, while convenient in terms of communication, nevertheless distracts attention from the human issues of sense making and meaning. The same use of language and the focus on abstractions and the future has been identified in the workplace spirituality literature.

Theoretical and practical implications

Theoretically, the field of workplace spirituality has gained considerable progress over the past thirty years, however, as we have noted crusader type discourses have dominated the field and left a considerable gap for a more critical voice and understanding. The identification of managerialist, dualist and reified conceptions of the field is arguably a first step towards a discussion to include issues that have been at the forefront of critical management studies for a

long time. Workplace spirituality can contribute to that debate by including a more critical perspective.

Conclusion

This paper presented the workplace spirituality literature as characterised by two factions: the crusaders and the critics. The crusaders were noted as promoting the notion of workplace spirituality, uncritically. The critics, however, adopted a more reticent approach calling for caution. We uncovered three themes in the bulk of the crusader contributions noted as functional and managerial; dualistic and reified and compared them with an ethnographic study of two self-sustaining spiritual communities adopted by one of the current authors (Brown, 2009).

Overall, we argue that the three themes identified are antithesis of organisations with a spiritual reason d'être and the field of workplace spirituality is unlikely to develop and/or contribute to management discourse in the absence of a clear attempt to address these three themes and issues noted. The field of workplace spirituality, has in our view, considerable potential to transform the work experience of many people. However, that potential is more likely to be realised if the discussion around the efficacy of a more spiritually informed workplace gives greater voice to the critics. More specifically the discourse would benefit from recognising and addressing the current emphasis on managerial, dualistic and reified conceptions.

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