

**Grace Filled or Grace Felled?
Spirituality in the Workplace, Orientalism at Work, and
Values as a Model for Engagement
V6.0**

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All have suffered. All are equally full of nonsense. Therefore, in principle, there must be a new and universal politics—a politics of no praise and no blame. By these means, reconciliation must be achieved—cooperatively, in a disposition of mutual tolerance, trust, and respect.

The genetic unity of humankind is inherent. That unity is scientifically known to be so. Yet, the “difference-makers” speak and act as if there were some superior humans and inferior humans, superior nationalisms and inferior nationalisms, and so on—as if merely incidental differences were of immense significance. To make much of incidental differences is merely to argue about old stories. Instead of all that, everyone must be exercised anew—toward (and in, and As) Truth in always present-time. – The World Friend, Adi Da, Not-Two Is Peace

Grace Filled or Grace Felled?

Spirituality in the Workplace, Orientalism at Work, and Values as a Model for Engagement

A spiritual disposition at the individual and global level may be good for the planet. 'Spirituality in the workplace,' at first glance, offers an impression of the best of both worlds, a practice that is both individually particular and globally conscious. I assert that, in field application, there are inherent challenges in the execution of spirituality in the workplace. The term 'spiritual' is unique to religion in that it does not generally connote the dogma and historical problems associated with religion. The challenge for spirituality is that there is no concise meaning that is generally understood. To embrace spirituality in the workplace as an embrace of religious plurality requires great sensitivity and accommodation. One may operate on the premise that particular religious beliefs are based on essentially the same spiritual values. Individual, social, political, and economic rationale for 'power over the other' was exposed and validated by Edward W. Said in his groundbreaking work *Orientalism*. This legacy of 'power over other' continues to be evident in the workplace and crosses socio-economic, political and cultural 'dominions'. The practical implementation of accommodating religious plurality and religious expression as described as 'spiritual', may further aggravate current power orientations and create divisions among individuals and groups. The engagement of spirituality in the workplace culture may, in fact, exacerbate normalization, stereotyping, and hegemonic tendencies as differences among individual and group preferences are obviated. Ultimately, the negative impact of a 'spiritual work orientation' may outweigh the perceived benefits. As an alternative, a values-oriented model may offer a less controversial, measurable, and better understood mode of engagement.

Introduction

"It is undeniable reality that workplace spirituality has received growing attention during the last decade".¹ In this paper, I consider potential advantage and challenges with the engagement of a 'spirituality in the workplace'-oriented organizational directive. This paper addresses some of the considerations of authority and power as framed within the lens of Orientalism, as defined in Edward Said's book *Orientalism*² and the work of Richard King, as detailed in his book, *Orientalism and Religion*.³ As alternative to 'spirituality in the workplace', I describe a values-orientation that may offer some of the same benefits of spirituality in the workforce but with fewer problems in interpretation and execution. I will argue that a values-driven organization is less risky and offers the rewards of an engaged, and conscious workforce, and without the potential 'power over other' challenges that could manifest within a 'spirituality in the workplace'-oriented organizational model. I will refer to the journal article, *The question of theoretical foundations of the spirituality at work movement*, by Richard Hudson, Department of Commerce, Mount Allison University, in articulating some the theoretical challenges offered with the 'spirituality in the workplace'.⁴

¹ *qtd. in.* Long, Bradley S. In the Beginning Was the Word: The Discursive Construction of Spiritual Work and Spiritual Workers. Halifax: Saint Mary's University. 2011. Print.16.

² Said, Edward W. *Orientalism* New York: Random House, 1979. Print.

³ King, Richard. *Orientalism and Religion, Post-colonial Theory, India and 'The Mystic East'*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print.

⁴ *Journal of Management, Spirituality, and Religion*. Vol.11, No.1, United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis. 2014. Print.

The focus of the paper will be mid to large sized commercial enterprises, however, the arguments may also apply within other organizational structures.

Orientalism

As lens for this essay, I focus our attention on the work of Edward W. Said in which the individual, social, political, and economic rationale for ‘power over the other’ was exposed and validated by Edward W. Said in his groundbreaking book, *Orientalism*. Said cites:

Orientalism is a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment. Continued investment made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, and an acceptable grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness, just as that same investment multiplied - indeed, made truly productive – the statements proliferated out from Orientalism into the general culture.⁵

In quoting this text, I am comparing the ‘grid for filtering’ spirituality in the workplace and the associated applications, which becomes a label for individuals and groups of people either ‘insiders’ or ‘outsiders’. Whether insider or outsider is relevant or not, what is of note here is that differences between the perceived groups are heightened to the potential detriment of cohesiveness of teams and organizations.

Said speaks of *strategic location* as his principle methodological devices for studying authority. He describes *strategic location* as:

a way of describing the author’s position in a text with regard to the Oriental material he writes about, and *strategic formation*, which is the way of analyzing the relationship between texts and way in which groups, of texts, types of texts, even textual genres, acquire mass, density, and referential power among themselves and thereafter in the culture at large. ¹ (italics original)

Here I hold *strategic location* as the position one holds within an organization and *strategic formation* as the analysis of data which in the world of work is peoples’ activities and results. Strategic location and formation together offer an authority either perceived or real that becomes the worldview of the beholder.

A further element of Orientalism which I will consider in this paper is that of *representation*. Said offers that:

⁵ Said, Edward W, *Orientalism*, New York: Random House. 1979. Print.6.

My analysis of the Orientalist texts therefore places emphasis on the evidence, which is by no means invisible, for such representations *as representations* (italics original), not as “natural: depictions of the Orient... The exteriority of the representation is always governed by some version of the truism that if the Orient could represent itself, it would; since it cannot, the representation does the job, for the West, and *faute de mieux* (‘all the better’, WK insert), for the poor Orient.¹

Said goes on to assert that:

Another reason for insisting on exteriority is that I believe it needs to be made clear about cultural discourse and exchange within a culture what is commonly circulated by it is not “truth” but representations. It hardly needs to be demonstrated again that language itself is a highly organized and encoded system, which employs many devices to express, indicate, exchange messages and information, represent, and so forth. In any instance of at least written language, there is no such thing as a delivered presence, but a *re-presence* (italics original), or a representation. The value, efficacy, strength, apparent veracity of a written statement about the Orient therefore relies very little, and cannot instrumentally depend, on the Orient as such.⁶

The personal dimension is also critical and whether one’s world view is from an insider or outsider perspective. Said states, “The nexus of knowledge and power creating “the Oriental” and in a sense obliterating him as a human being is therefore not for me an exclusively academic matter, Yet it is an intellectual matter of some very obvious importance.⁷ One could apply the same logic proposed by Said, to the quality ‘spiritual’. This is especially disconcerting in the world of work in which workers may or may not have a familiar spiritual practice. The homogeneity of saying “she is so spiritual” is not that far from “she is so religious” and the label can create negative connotations.

Said offers that “much of the information and knowledge about Islam and the Orient that was used by the colonial powers to justify their colonialism derived from Oriental scholarship.⁸ A key concept Said argues is the construction of identity, an *alterego*, that involves the construction of opposites and “others” whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from “us”.⁹ This construction of an alterego, could potentially be applied to insiders and outsiders within a ‘spirituality in the workplace’ movement. I am reminded of Christians who preface their comments with, “as a Christian...”. Spirituality in its most authentic application may be an optimal term and practice for transcending differences and for finding commonalities in the human experience.

⁶ Said, Edward W, *Orientalism*, New York: Random House. 1979. Print. 21.

⁷ Said, Edward W. 27.

⁸ Said, Edward W. 343.

⁹ Said, Edward W. 331.

Said acknowledges that “we all need some foundation on which to stand; the question is how extreme and unchangeable is our formulation of what this foundation is”. The challenge, Said attests that “Orientalism hides the interests of the Orientalist.”¹⁰ He goes on to say that his book *Orientalism* “appeared to be the first book that gave a serious answer back to the West that had never actually listened to or forgiven the Oriental for being an Oriental.”¹¹ Said goes on to say “I believe *Orientalism* offers a perspective of crossing barriers rather than maintaining barriers” and speaks of humanistic study as seeking ideally to go beyond coercive limitations on thought toward a non-dominative, and non-essentialist type of learning.”¹² I assert that to artfully engage in spirituality in the workplace, as Said advises, one needs to take care that one is not crossing barriers. Said suggests that although Western hegemony is still evident in US policy-makers, the media, and US foreign policy itself, there is a new public consciousness in the subaltern and disadvantaged.¹³ Here I bring attention to stereotyping which continues to be a problem, we see it often in the news. Two groups come to mind, Native American and Muslims, specifically the women in these groups are often the most disadvantaged. To practice an alternative spirituality in one’s work could be ‘a career limiting move’. On the other hand to practice ‘spirituality’ at work, is an idea that is challenging to imagine. At Saint Mary’s University we have a multi-faith prayer room. I understand that the Muslim students are the only ones to use it. I have heard of instances of meditation at work. If the president practices meditation, for political reasons, does it behoove others to start practicing as well?

Richard King, in his book *Orientalism and Religion*, cites Ronald Inden, in his study *Imagining India* (1990). Inden suggests that Indological discourse transforms Indians into subjugated objects of a superior knowledge, which remains in the possession of the Western Indological expert in that they do not provide descriptive accounts of what they study. They also provide commentaries that claim to represent the thoughts and actions of the Indian subject in such a manner as to communicate their general nature or ‘essence’ to the Western reader¹⁴. Inden is also critical of hegemonic accounts that provide reductionist and causal explanations for the ‘irrational’ behavior of Indians. I offer this example of Orientalism and apply it to the workplace, that is, in a fear-oriented or less open and

¹⁰ Edward W. Said, 333.

¹¹ Edward W. Said, 335.

¹² Edward W. Said, 336.

¹³ Edward W. Said, 348.

¹⁴ Cited in King, Richard. *Orientalism and Religion, Post-colonial Theory, India and ‘The Mystic East’*. New York: Routledge, 1999. 90.

conscious work culture, certain workers could label other workers as ‘irrational’ dependent upon whether they ‘practiced spirituality’ or ‘were spiritual’ or how they practiced. Richard King finds Inden’s work interesting for its critical analysis of ‘affirmative Orientalism’, generally motivated by an admiration for, and sometimes by a firm belief in the superiority of Eastern cultures¹⁵. In context of spirituality in the workplace, a ‘spiritual workplace’ could be considered superior to a ‘non-spiritual workplace’ regardless whether or not this is true. And in fact, how does one measure this? The romantic image of India portrays Indian culture as profoundly spiritual, idealistic, and mystical¹⁶. Romantic Orientalism agrees with the prevailing view that India is the mirror opposite of Europe, a distortion, even if motivated by a respect for the Orient and as such, allows for a domestication and control of the East¹⁷. There is a romantic notion that can be applied to ‘spirituality’ even as the definition of spirituality is evasive.

What is meant by Spirituality in the Workplace?

There are many definitions of spirituality. I offer the definition of religion as per the Dalai Lama’s distinction:

Religion I take to be concerned with faith in the claims of one faith or another, an aspect which is the acceptance of some form of heaven or nirvana. Concerned with this are religious teachings or dogma, ritual prayer, and so on. Spirituality I take to be concerned with those qualities of the human spirit – such as love and compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, a sense of responsibility, a sense of harmony – which brings happiness to both self and others.¹⁸

In this paper I will speak of spirituality, not religion, although it is understood that religions began with spirituality. Applying the distinctions offered by Jerry Biberman and Len Tischler, spirituality has two non-contradictory directions:

- (usually inward) into a deeper, broader experience, toward a transcendent universality or higher reality (whatever name we give it) and
- Toward being intimately, interdependently interconnected with the entire universe and everything/everyone in it.¹⁹

¹⁵ King, Richard. 92.

¹⁶ King, Richard. 92.

¹⁷ King, Richard. 92.

¹⁸ *qtd. in.* Biberman, Jerry and Len Tischler. *Spirituality in Business. Theory, Practice, and Future Directions.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2008.2.

¹⁹ Biberman, Jerry and Len Tischler. *Ibid.* 2.

Workplace Spirituality as defined by Robert Giacalone and Carole Jurkiewicz is “a framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employees’ experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected in a way that provides feelings of compassion and joy.”²⁰ I pose the question do the feelings of ‘unity’ and ‘oneness’ and ‘creativity’ also have relevance within the definition of workplace spirituality? And what exactly is meant by ‘transcendence’?

In this paper, the workplace is defined as a physical space, or a virtual organization. A workplace is defined by a community of at least two people who work either together or with a common overall goal and interact with one another. The relationship could be peer to peer, boss to subordinate, either in a direct or indirect reporting relationship. I pose the question here, could the term workplace refer to a solo entrepreneur who has customers such as a retailer? Does the workplace include all the stakeholders such as suppliers and shareholders? Does the definition of workplace include volunteers? My sense is that the definition of workplace is fluid and fits the definition as long as there is a working interpersonal relationship and transactions of goods or services.

While the distinction “workplace” is broad in context, I suggest that for most Westerners, the term is generally succinct in meaning, the word spirituality is less clear. The ‘workplace’ I speak of in this paper, is a generalized term that encompasses a domain of ideas, creation, production, people, buyers, and sellers. It is also a domain that is often political both on the inside and in relations with outside stakeholders. Within the domain of the workplace, there are those who have more power than others, there are ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’. I posit, that dependent upon the culture of the organization, which is generally instrumented by tone, actions, directives, and values (either spoken or unspoken) of the leaders, a work environment could be measured on a sliding scale with trust at one end and fear at the other end. Assuming that a work environment operates within a high degree of trust, one could assume that this particular workplace would be more open to implementing a ‘Spirituality in the Workplace’ culture. The inverse then, would also be true, that a workplace that has a level of fear that permeates the culture, may be less open to the perceived even greater personal and group vulnerability that ‘Spirituality in the Workplace’ might invite. It is common knowledge that, unlike joining a social club or sports team, the workplace is for many people an organization upon which their entire livelihood is dependent, one’s income and the basics of life such as food and shelter for themselves and their

²⁰ Giacalone, Robert A. and Carole L. Jurkiewicz. *Handbook of Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Performance*. New York: Armonk. 2003. 3-28.

families is reliant at some level ‘fitting in’ at the workplace. If we consider then that the posturing of power over another within the workplace, particularly by those people who have greater actual or hegemonic authority over others, may in fact, be further heightened in an ‘open’ and ‘spiritual’ environment. I will address some examples further on in this paper.

Next I cite Richard Hudson, commerce professor at Mount Allison University who also holds a doctorate in philosophy. In his paper, *The question of theoretical foundations for the spirituality at work movement*, Hudson examines the work of Benefiel. Benefiel called for the creation of a philosophical foundation for the spirituality at work movement, which she believes to be at risk because of the lack of theory and disagreement about key terms.²¹ Hudson cites Karakas who claims there are over seventy definitions of spirituality at work.²² Hudson quotes Benefiel, “In an effort to be inclusive, many proponents of spirituality in organizations offer definitions so broad they lose their substance”.²³ I propose that this vagueness within the sometime political and tenuous work environment, may generate ‘normative’ or ‘acceptable’ individual and group expressions of spirituality.

Some of the elements of the spirituality at work movement, include meaningful work, and community contribution. Another element is living as the ‘authentic self’. Hudson offers that there are virtually no articles that examine the ideas of a major thinker – whether philosopher, theologian, or psychologist – and apply them to the question of spirituality at work.²⁴ Hudson cites Driver who examines spirituality at work from the point of view of the French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan, who arrives at the conclusion that the language used in the movement fails to attain the true self and instead this language consists of “empty speech”.²⁵ For Driver, Lacan recognizes the fragmentation of the authentic self, while the spirituality at work movement insists that the authentic self is unified. Driver says that the current definition of organizational spirituality “...claim to lead to the experience of an authentic self at work, which is connected to a higher order, fully integrated, balanced, complete, and ultimately fulfilled”.²⁶ Driver proposes that “...the conscious ego, the rationale speech of an individual, which we seem to identify as being the subject or the self is far from being an authentic

²¹ Hudson, Richard, *The question of theoretical foundations for the spirituality at work movement*, *Journal of Management, Spirituality, and Religion*. Vol 11, No 1, 1-3. United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, 2014. 27.

²² Hudson, Richard. 27.

²³ qtd, in Hudson, Richard, 33.

²⁴ qtd. in Hudson, Richard, 38.

²⁵ qtd. in Hudson, Richard, 38.

²⁶ qtd. in Hudson, Richard, 39.

subject or self that actually exists.”²⁷ Driver goes on to criticize the spirituality at work literature which purports to show happy people who have realized their spirituality at work, and have come to feel they are now unified whole persons, that these feelings are false – they are inauthentic.²⁸

Richard Hudson cites Driver as she criticizes the spirituality at work literature for seeking a unified whole person, and claims that rather than looking for organizational discourse in which individuals express how balanced, complete and whole they feel through a more spiritual approach to work, full speech is more likely found in narratives of fragmentation, of disintegration and of failed representation.²⁹ Hudson tells us that Driver states, that from a Lacanian analysis, the expression of organizational spirituality can lead to delusion, particularly to the delusion of holism.³⁰ I concur with Driver’s position when she criticizes the spirituality at work movement by suggesting that it consists of a bunch of feel-good experiences. In reality, reaching the true self is painful and that religion too, is difficult and painful as even Plato emphasized.³¹ Another challenge with the spirituality at work movement that Hudson offers is with religious orthodoxy, in that many traditions insist on orthodoxy and they do not ascribe to the pick and mix of New Age thought.³² Leveraging Driver’s stance, Hudson offers some strong assertions that religions do not aim at making the self feel good – instead they tend to seek submission to God and that the goal of the authentic integrated whole self is an illusion. In fact, if the integrated self is unattainable, then perhaps all the movement offers is a lie which might still persuade employees to work hard – if they fall for the illusory self the movement presents.³³ Hudson’s statement, may in fact, be an example of Orientalism as demonstrated by cultural hegemony in the workplace. Edward W. Said speaks of Orientalism as collective notion of identity “us”.³⁴ Once “we”, the “spiritual workforce” is labelled, does this not represent an example of “normalization”? In fact, I assert here that the movement of “workplace spirituality” runs a parallel trajectory with Orientalism and the description of the “Oriental”. Both “spirituality in the workplace” and “the Oriental” are terms that are, in effect, indescribable, yet conspicuously, as in the case of Orientals, scholars write about these ‘people’ and their ‘cultures’. Much like the scholars, literary writers, artists, governments, and complicit insiders propagated the definition of difference of the Orientalists by representing what was not Occidental.

²⁷ qtd. in Hudson, Richard, 39.

²⁸ qtd. in Hudson, Richard, 39.

²⁹ qtd. in Hudson, Richard, 39.

³⁰ qtd. in Hudson, Richard, 39.

³¹ qtd. in Hudson, Richard, 39.

³² Hudson, Richard, 39.

³³ Hudson, Richard, 39.

³⁴ Said, Edward W. 7.

In effect, I assert a whole movement is now “normalizing” and essentializing “spirituality in the workplace”. As an example, if a worker affirms that he or she practices ‘spirituality in the workplace’ and his or her colleague does not, is the ‘spiritual one’ and insider and the non-practicing colleague an ‘outsider’? The parallels are significant in my opinion and the potential cultural and personal problems for the “spiritual” workers, like the “Orientals”, are also significant. One difference is that the non-practicing person could in fact, be an insider and define himself or herself by what she is not, that is ‘spiritual’. Leaders who are aligned and engaged with the idea of spirituality in the workplace will necessarily engage in practices and policies that support this position. I purport that a workplace culture that encourages spirituality in the workplace could in fact, foster an environment that focuses on differences and a sense of separateness. The outcome, in this case, could be an increase in cultural entropy and disengagement. I pose the question, what are the attributes, both positive and limiting, of a culture that advocates spirituality in the workplace? Is the impact measurable? Without measurement, we are unable to calculate both the advantages and the limitations of the spirituality initiative.

In Canada, the *Human Rights Act* prohibits discrimination in respect of certain characteristics. These include age, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, physical or mental disability, family status, marital status and in respect of certain activities such as employment and provision of services. Employers and service providers have a duty to accommodate to the point of undue hardship if a rule, policy or decision would negatively affect a person on the basis of a prohibited ground of discrimination. ³⁵ *Diversity and Inclusion* means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual. ³⁶ Both human rights and diversity and inclusion offer legal respite for people who are in situations that challenge these mandates. However, do people understand their rights and do they feel safe to take a personal stand? A recent Globe and Mail newspaper article states that:

Canada's urban natives, who now comprise half of all Métis, first nations and Inuit, feel they are viewed negatively by the larger society, even as they display a high level of tolerance for other

³⁵ Manning, Loretta. Cox and Palmer Presentation at Saint Mary's University. December 10, 2014. In person.

³⁶ Bird, Alison, Cox and Palmer Presentation at Saint Mary's University, December 10, 2014. In person.

cultures. It is a failure of Canada's imagination that its original inhabitants continue to suffer the most distorted stereotypes of any non-white group.³⁷

Expressing one's spirituality at work may not always be optimal. Therefore, as an alternative to spirituality, I offer a values orientation.

Spirituality versus Values – A Global Consideration

It is common knowledge that the world economic system is mostly controlled by global corporations that often exploit 'the others' for optimum self-benefit. One problem is that billions of people, mostly the poorest, have been and continue to be exploited by this model. The planet itself, which sustains us all, is under siege. It is general knowledge that man's dominant relationship with Planet Earth and all its resources is focused on ownership and control. It is desperately in need of paradigm shift.

"Governments everywhere agreed in 2009 to work to keep the rise in global average temperature below a 2-degree-Celsius threshold to avoid "dangerous" climate change. The United Nations warns that to meet this goal, immediate cuts in greenhouse gas emissions are needed. The problem is that international negotiations move slowly, while temperatures are rising fast—faster, in fact, than at any time since civilization began. The least-common-denominator model of negotiations, in which countries endeavor to concede as little as possible, will just make things worse.

The costs of retooling economies to run more efficiently on renewable energy are negligible compared with the damage the world will incur from runaway global warming. Haiyan and other recent weather extremes are wake-up calls to the urgency of ending our fossil fuel addiction. If we continue to ignore them, the costs of dealing with climate change will surely extend far off the charts."³⁸

The current political and economic model is based on 'power over' in order to maximize profits and benefit self-interests. We see many corporations dictating to and lobbying governments regarding policy decisions which support continued control and ownership of the resources. There are systemic issues in the way these global corporation stakeholders are compensated. I suggest that many of these corporations are run by responsible men and women. However, world economic and market systems have obliged leaders to make decisions based upon short term profits often at the expense of the long term sustainability, health and well-being considerations for humanity and all life on planet earth. I

³⁷ theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/editorials/natives-still-suffer-shameful-stereotypes/article568349/ Nov 2014. Web.

³⁸ Larson, Janet. http://www.earth-policy.org/plan_b_updates/2013/update118 . 16 October 2014. Web.

suggest that at the individual level, one often has a sense of higher purpose regarding responsible decision making, and yet the global economic compensation system does not always support this disposition. I argue in favor of the theory, that unless the fear-oriented psyche and egoic desire for 'more' and 'more' is cut through consciously by everybody-all-at-once, the current 'power over other' abuse at the individual, societal, environmental and non-human levels will continue. I suggest that personal and collective fear supported by unconscious habits of thinking originating in mind and emotion, form the rationale for people, much like the Orientalist, to choose, either consciously or subconsciously, a posture of 'power over the other'. Again, I reiterate, it is obvious that the world is in crisis and it has been man's making. The industrial revolution, scientific materialism and the advancement of technology encourage 'growth' without always considering the consequences. We now see weapons of mass destruction and genocide at unprecedented levels along with insatiable consumerism. I assert that the advertising industry, under the directives of corporations, continues to create the brand called 'ME' and in quest to satisfy 'my needs' and create more desire, it has, in fact, built a consuming monster. The biggest challenges we are now all facing are environmental ones. I pose the question, "Do we have time to turn the planet's health around before it is too late?" The impetus for a new world order around a common set of values in which 'everybody-all-at-once' participates in change for 'the greater good' is self-evident. An effective spirituality in the workforce and/or values-oriented organizational structure may provide the impetus for organizational consciousness and strategic decision making that supports the long term health of planet earth.

It turns out that a values orientation can also be good for business. Based upon survey results, Barrett Values Centre published the following characteristics of resilient organizations: a high level of staff engagement, a low level of cultural entropy, a vision of the future shared by all employees, a set of values shared by all employees, a focus on agility, adaptability and innovation.³⁹ These results are aligned with a four year study of nine to ten firms in each of twenty industries, carried out by Kotter and Heskett of Harvard Business School and published in 1992, found that firms with a strong adaptive culture based on shared values, outperformed firms with rigid or weak cultures by a significant margin.⁴⁰

One of the constant business challenges is to attracting, retaining, and engage excellent employees. This workforce is changing. In his book, *Fast Future, How the Millennial Generation is*

³⁹ Centre, Barrett Values. www.valuescentre.com Corporate Presentation, North Carolina: Barrett Values Centre. November 2013. Web.

⁴⁰ Ibid. Centre, Barrett Values. Web.

Shaking Up the Workplace, author David Burstein describes the millennials' approach to social change as "pragmatic idealism", in that they hold a deep desire to make the world a better place, combined with an understanding that doing so requires building new institutions while working inside and outside existing institutions.

With eighty-million millennials (people who are today eighteen to thirty years old) coming of age and emerging as leaders, this is the largest generation in U.S. history, and, by 2020, its members will represent one out of every three adults. They are more ethnically and racially diverse than their elders and have begun their careers at a time when the recession has set back the job market. Yet they remain optimistic about their future and are deeply connected to one another. ⁴¹

To further point to a shift in the personal and collective values of the labor force, sociologist Paul H. Ray and psychologist Sherry Ruth Anderson in their social sciences book, *The Cultural Creatives: How 50 Million People Are Changing the World* offer a new values paradigm around what is important to the people. The authors introduce the term "Cultural Creatives" to describe a large segment in western society that has recently developed beyond the standard paradigm of modernists or progressives versus traditionalists or conservatives. Ray and Anderson claim to have found that fifty million adult Americans (slightly over one quarter of the adult population) can now be identified as belonging to this group. ⁴²

Ray and Anderson created a questionnaire to identify "Cultural Creatives" in Western society. The following characteristics were identified as qualities of a "Cultural Creative". Agreement with ten or more qualities indicates status as a "Cultural Creative".

- love of nature and deep caring about its preservation, and its natural balance
- strong awareness of the planet-wide issues like climate change and poverty and a desire to see more action on them
- being active themselves
- willingness to pay higher taxes or spend more money for goods if that money went to improving the environment
- heavy emphasis on the importance of developing and maintaining relationships
- heavy emphasis on the importance of helping others and developing their unique gifts
- volunteer with one or more good causes
- intense interest in spiritual and psychological development
- see spirituality as an important aspect of life, but worry about religious fundamentalism
- desire equality for women and men in business, life and politics
- concern and support of the well-being of all women and children

⁴¹ Burnstein, David. *Fast Future: How the Millennial Generation Is Shaping our World*. Boston: Beacon Press. 2014.web.

⁴² Ray, Paul H., Sherry Ruth Anderson. *Cultural Creatives, How 50 Million People are Changing the Planet*. New York: Broadway Books. 2001. Print. 4.

- want politicians and government to spend more money on education, community programs and the support of a more ecologically sustainable future
- are unhappy with the left and right in politics
- optimism towards the future
- want to be involved in creating a new and better way of life
- are concerned with big business and the means they use to generate profits, including destroying the environment and exploiting poorer countries
- unlikely to overspend or be heavily in debt
- dislike the emphasis of modern cultures on "making it" and "success", on consuming and making money
- like people, places and things that are different or exotic

Just under half of the Cultural Creatives population comprise the more educated, leading-edge thinkers. This group includes many writers, artists, musicians, psychotherapists, alternative health care providers and other professionals. They combine a serious focus on their spirituality with a strong passion for social activism. Based upon this study, one quarter of all Americans in the United States belongs to this Cultural Creatives group, it would behoove business leaders to create a work environment and operate from within a leadership style that supports many of the qualities listed.⁴³ Ray and Anderson assert that "values are the best single predictor of real behavior". The list of five attributes below define the values that dictate a "Cultural Creative's" behavior:

- Authenticity, actions must be consistent with words and beliefs
- Engaged action and whole process learning; seeing the world as interwoven and connected
- Idealism and activism
- Globalism and ecology
- The importance of women

Core "Cultural Creatives" also value altruism, self-actualization, and spirituality.⁴⁴ It is evident from this list that alignment of the core values of these Cultural Creatives to the values of the organization in which they work is almost necessary to attract, retain, and engage them. I suggest that these values listed above are also representative of other Western countries such as Canada. In addition to a workforce that exemplifies qualities of authenticity and integrity, I suggest that these Cultural Creatives are less willing than previous generations to compromise their values in order to make a living. I suggest that core values may a viable measure of employee engagement and cultural agility.

⁴³ Ray, Paul H., Sherry Ruth Anderson. *Cultural Creatives, How 50 Million People are Changing the Planet*. New York: Broadway Books. 2001. Print. 4.

⁴⁴ Ray, Paul H., Sherry Ruth Anderson. *Cultural Creatives, How 50 Million People are Changing the Planet*. New York: Broadway Books. 2001. Print. 190.

Regarding challenges, business leaders are also faced with a more diverse workforce and a business model which may require offshore ‘management’ and nimbleness in a competitive global economy. Attraction and retention of workers is very important as high turnover, the cost of retraining, and loss of intelligent capital are expensive for the organization while impact competitiveness. To add to this list, leaders are also concerned with succession planning and legacy building, and fine-tuning processes to meet the demands of the global warming crisis. Suffice to say that business leadership offers a continuing challenge and yet to attract, retain and engage employees is critical to the long term viability. A spiritual or values in the workplace orientation appears to be aligned to the characteristics of both the Millennials and the Cultural Creatives as described.

Another area in which is greatly impacted by a values alignment is mergers and acquisitions. When the cultures of two companies merge, aside from people made redundant, there is often a culture clash. Nick Caduc of Stratco Partners, a management consulting firm, offers that most research confirms merger and acquisition deals have a mere fifty percent success rate. They suggest that while the integration deal may look great on paper, they found only a handful of organizations pay proper attention to the integration process. This case study suggests that a values orientation around not blame, no judgement, with openness and candor were key elements in aligning two management teams in an acquisition.

Last month we were brought into an acquisition project at just the right time. As is often the case, the deal looked great – it was financially accretive, there were cross-selling opportunities, there were cost redundancies that when adjusted would create exciting increases in free cash flow – but in spite of all this, the two “merged” units still operated in two silos, results were not being achieved, and there was an air of animosity along with dense frustration.

Firstly we brought together senior leaders from both groups to clearly establish relational and operating ground-rules for our interactions – no blame, no judgement, openness, candour and a willingness to find open ground. These “values” were co-created with participants being encouraged to hold one another to these highest ground-floor values. Next we acknowledged what wasn’t working – focusing on tactics and behaviours, not personalities – and made a commitment to wrestle the “eight-headed hydra” to the ground”. We then took time to envision what was the highest future possibility for the combined entity, clarified this, and grounded it in in quantifiable success metrics for the coming year. Finally we rolled up our sleeves trudging through each key issue – role clarity, handoffs between groups, communication, governance – prioritizing a tactical plan with dates and champions.

The result - the senior teams left the retreat “as one” – feeling energized, liberated and inspired to execute with a great sense of clarity. The real merger had begun. The Secret Ingredient - Dealing with the negative preconceptions and feelings about change up front while establishing behavioral and attitudinal rules of conduct before coming together – essentially creating a healthy culture for the series

of meetings – that could then extend into the merged organization and help everyone understand, Culture is King!⁴⁵

What I appreciate about this case study is the comment that the senior teams left the retreat as “one”. I suggest that without an alignment of values, this would not be the case.

Sometimes, when two or more people work together, there can be a sense of camaraderie that deeply connects the participants. Occasionally this sentiment is more than deep friendship, it is a deep feeling of interconnectedness. An example is people who have gone to war together who have a deep bond which stands the test of time. These sentiments may be interpreted as a spiritual connection, a deep sense of understanding of each other combined with trust. These people will go beyond the call of duty for each other and, as an extension, for the company. I suggest that a values-driven environment sets up the propensity for deep connections between workers. Adversely, I assert that Orientalist-type gestures, especially by the leadership team have the propensity to create a less trusting, fear-oriented environment. Consequently creativity and passion are stifled by ‘power over other’ issues.

Compared to the difficulty of tracking metrics on spirituality in the workplace, cultural engagement and cultural entropy can be measured through values. As an example, the Barrett Values Centre facilitates the measurement of the individual’s values in comparison to their perceived organizational values, both current values of the organization and desired values for the organization. Barrett Values Centre also has tools that determine, in the eyes of his peers, how well a leader is ‘walking the talk’ of his core values. To apply this same measurement within the domain of spirituality would be challenging, if not impossible.

Conclusion

Spirituality in the Workplace is a relatively new movement that is worthy of further scholarly consideration. A finite definition of ‘spirituality in the workplace’ does not yet exist. Organizations are offering gestures of ‘spirituality’, examples including courses in meditation, religious classes, yoga, fruit bars, and prayer rooms. As well, employees in some firms are engaging in ‘good work’ for their communities which could be considered spiritual. One could attest that the intent behind the spirituality in the workplace movement is authentic. The challenges are without a definition of what ‘spirituality in the workplace’ is, how does a leader implement policy, how does it look experientially, and what are

⁴⁵ www.stratecopartners.com/newperspectives-v1e5-strategy/ Sourced November 10, 2014. web.

the implications for both the employees who fit the majority who share a ‘spiritual practice’, and for those who practice as a minority? What about the uniqueness in customs and rituals? What practices and behaviors are acceptable and what are not? As an extreme example, if one worships the devil, is that acceptable at work?

I offer that the propensity for individual judgment, marginalizing, insiders and outsiders, and the hegemonic engagement of ‘power over others’ may be exacerbated within the notion of spirituality in the workplace and its associated policies, activities, and ‘norms’. Some organizations may choose to practice a specific religion, for example a Christian-based enterprise. How would working at the Christian enterprise serve the Muslim? The endeavor in principle of spirituality in the workplace is positive. It is in the execution that is gets confusing. Confusion in an already political and hierarchical organization often leads to a heightened feeling of malaise, which, at its worst, may turn to fear and distrust. In this case, the spiritual initiative which was meant to be useful could, in fact, become a detriment and lead to increased cultural entropy. I am reminded of a company I worked for in which we were asked to complete a *Best Places to Work* survey. I was in charge of implementing the survey and in relaying the results with the leadership team. There were several areas that needed improvement but these were not ‘on the radar’ of the leadership team. The challenge with asking employees for feedback is that if they participate, they would like to hear the results and be involved with the change management at some level. In implementing elements of Spirituality in the Workplace, I imagine that a leadership team with a collaborative approach could engage an ‘appreciative inquiry’ and some sort of feedback mechanism regarding these initiatives with some success.

If the goal is to inspire happy, engaged workers who are aligned to the directives of the organization, as an alternative to spirituality in the workplace, a values-driven organization may be more effective, measurable, and less risky. To be effective, a values orientation requires pre- and post measurement of cultural engagement and cultural entropy on a regular basis. It also requires collaboration around the deeper meaning of the values within the context of work teams and what is looks like when individual adopt the values and what happens when they do not. Values like work-life balance, openness, making a difference, compassion, humour and fun, respect, courage, and personal growth are values that are quite easy to comprehend and yet they could fall into the domain of ‘spiritual’ yet, without the ‘baggage’ that may be attached to the word spiritual. One firm that offers a values measurement toolkit is the Barrett Values Centre. Their values measurement model enables companies to measure both the levels of engagement and the levels of cultural entropy at the leadership, team, and organizational levels. The results demonstrate the more aligned the employees

personal values are to those of the organization the greater the engagement and productivity. Conversely, the greater the employee dissatisfaction the greater the cultural entropy and the lower the productivity.⁴⁶

In the concluding paragraphs of *Religion and Orientalism*, Richard King relays his primary motivation in calling into question the textualist, essentialist, and ‘world-religions’ approaches within religious studies, as simplistic representations that only serve to foster stereotypical and ahistorical forms that fail to represent the accurately the homogeneity of the human experience and may also remain in complicity with particular ideological agendas.⁴⁷ My sense is that the stereotypical forms that he speaks of may encourage insiders and outsiders and focus less on the universal humanism that connects us. Richard King also asserts, that based upon the work of Gadamer, Foucault, and Said, that it would seem to be impossible for any narrative to be free from ideological conditioning.⁴⁸ If this is the case, it behoves an organization’s leadership team to tread carefully and notice their own prejudices and those of their employees that may in fact, do unjust harm to their fellow employees.

King asserts that one cannot avoid having an agenda or a perspective upon things by virtue of one’s cultural and historical particularity.⁴⁹ King suggests that if one rejects the isolationist premises that underpin the Orientalist’s distinction between East and West, the possibility of interaction and dialogue remains as long as we remain open-minded to interpretations.⁵⁰ If interconnectedness is what people are looking for, perhaps focusing on values and not the “S word” may be optimal. Business is about taking advantage of opportunities and mitigating risks. Implementing ‘spiritual’ practices is ‘touchy business’ and unless employees are aligned, and this includes those who are in minority and in less powerful positions, in a diverse and often global workplace, is the risk worth the reward?

⁴⁶ Centre, Barrett Values. www.valuescentre.com October 15, 2014. Web.

⁴⁷ King, Richard. *Orientalism and Religion, Post-colonial Theory, India and ‘The Mystic East’*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print. 94.

⁴⁸ King, Richard. 94.

⁴⁹ King, Richard, 95.

⁵⁰ King, Richard, 95.

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