Chapter 37
Management, Spirituality, and Religion: Where Do We Go From Here?

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Abstract This chapter provides a retrospective view of the field of management from the perspective of a management scholar who has worked with MBA students and with executives on the integration of faith and spirituality in the workplace. Andre Delbecq has also been active in the Academy of Management and reflects on the evolution of the academy's acceptance of the new field of "management, spirituality, and religion." This chapter concludes with a vision for where the field may be going next as leaders cope with ever-increasing complexity and the role that spiritual and religious wisdom may play in leadership and organizational development.

Introduction

I am always cautious when asked to speculate regarding the future of *management, spirituality, and religion* as a disciplinary interest group within the Academy of Management. As a scholar who is not a scientific, societal, nor religious historian or sociologist, I can only speak from a personal vantage point. This has two dangers: experience is always particular and our unfolding world is subject to forces that are not easily forecast.

Therefore, let me state the context from which my remarks are generated. Relative to the "M" (in MSR), I am a management scholar whose work has focused on the management of innovation and executive decision-making. In addition to the working professional MBAs I teach, during last two decades, I have also engaged extensively in leadership formation with technology and health-care executives. Therefore, my viewpoint is shaped by experiences with leaders in two rapidly

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changing industries. Relative to the "S" (in MSR), I have been intensely active in bridging between contemporary spirituality and management studies for more than a decade. I am hardly an "objective outsider" commenting on the "faith and work" movement. Relative to the "R" (in MSR), I am an active Roman Catholic who teaches at a Jesuit university that resides in Silicon Valley. The valley is a religiously diverse melting pot where Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and adherents of many religions alongside agnostics and atheists enter into dialog. There are few geographic nodes more religiously plural and more comfortable with interreligious expression. Readers should take all this into account as they read my perspective.

Where Did MSR Come From

MSR emerged at the end of a long "secular" half-century. Between 1950 and the turn of the century, most American universities moved further away from their religious roots.

In 1960, I likely participated in one of the last managerial doctoral study programs in a land grant university where candidates were asked to compose a "philosophy of management." This was an exercise setting forth personal values and behavioral commitments regarding self and relationships with others in the context of complex organizations. The normative roots of the assignment rested in an assumed heritage of Western morals and values informed by the wisdom of exemplary managerial practitioners. Early behavioral studies were hardly referenced at this time. Still even then within the public university in which I studied there was no discourse regarding religious heritage.

> O wonder, all is wonder! How one flees Him from Whom there can be no separation to pursue that which can have no duration. 'For verily it is not the eyes that grow blind, but it is the hearts within the breasts that grow blind.'
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> Ibn' Ata illah
> Qur'an XXII 46

By the 1970s, the expected means to calibrate the inner leadership compass were social and mathematical sciences as sources for normative behavior. Now philosophical values concerned with virtue or ethics only marginally amplified the social science perspective. Indeed, the study of ethics was often seen as a peripheral overlay on management studies, a remnant of the prior philosophical period only begrudgingly referenced by most of my colleagues. Personal character, values, and deep religious instincts were seen as outside academic discourse within management. Science was to provide answers to "right behavior."

Indeed, social science did provide great advances in our understanding of individuals, teams, organizations, and larger systems. The importance of individual dignity was affirmed in motivation studies. Models of personal development provided insights into growth toward greater psychological maturity. Our understanding of high-functioning groups leaped forward, and the creative potential of pooled judgments gave new impetus to shared decision-making. The potential for decentralized

and empowered teamwork emerged, and models of loosely coupled and linked networks developed. The weakness of overcontrol and misused power was documented. The distortions of undue centralization and monocratic hierarchy were exposed. This is to mention just a few highlights of social science achievement and does not do justice to a half-century of contributions to management studies. Still, a dark side of human behavior continued to make mischief. Narcissism, hubris, and greed distorted leadership and organizational outcomes (Delbecq 2006). Despite new tools for facilitating and aggregating judgments, strategic decisions remained thwarted by impatience, fear, arrogance, and the inability to step away from prior biases (Nutt and Paul 2002). Yes, knowledge of what could be and scientifically "should be" had been greatly advanced. But the common experience of those working within complex organizations as well as newspaper headlines concerning disgraced contemporary leaders across institutions provided constant reminders of leadership failure. Knowledge of behaviors that should lead to normatively superior outcomes did not assure that the "better" would actually emerge.

Late at night in hotel and airport lounges, the business leaders I worked with on complex change endeavors began to quietly ask if there was not another dimension to leadership that needed be addressed. They would inquire of me whether management studies dealt with the deep inner life of the leader. The word "spirituality" was not commonly evoked in the late 1980s or early 1990s, but this was the subject that was being referenced.

Seeming to echo this executive feedback, MBAs consistently remarked on attributes of character, inner strength, wisdom, and patterns of motivation associated with positive leaders who spoke as guest lecturers in my classes. They also seemed able to accurately identify inwardly distorted leaders who later were identified with mismanagement or scandal. While the academy paid less and less attention to "character," a societal movement was emerging. It would be identified at the turn of the century as a megatrend called *spirituality*. Spiritual maturity was once again being explored alongside psychological maturity as a precondition for transformational leadership. Those of us active within the Academy of Management do not need sociologists to tell us that the early stages of this movement were not fostered through the academy. Even in the late 1990s, I could not imagine "God" or "transcendence" being mentioned as a central topic within a business school.

Where Have We Traveled Recently

During the long years when the "secular curtain" was drawn within the Academy of Management, attention to values was not entirely absent. A secular and humanistic language utilizing such terms as individual worth, interpersonal support, and stakeholder involvement, often seeming a parallel to religious language, was present in some areas of management studies. But when the secular curtain was breeched by attention to "spirituality" at the beginning of the new century, many of us felt a deep relief. Finally, one could draw upon the great religious and wisdom tradition,

reference their symbolic languages, utilize their insights regarding spiritual disciplines that formed character, and discuss a more comprehensive set of organizational outcomes beyond short run utilitarian achievement. Many of us were grateful to the early pioneers who bravely brought spiritual insights back into the public discourse within management studies.

In these early years of a new century, the *Management, Spirituality, and Religion* Interest Group was formed, and discussion was populated by much personal testimony regarding how spiritual and religious insight had (might) inspire modalities of behavior that were generative, compassionate, and more in keeping with the fullness of the whole person – body, mind, and spirit. At last, spiritual riches that had nourished many could be shared. "Experiential" might be the dominant descriptor of this emergent phase.

However, the concepts and methods of social science were also brought to bear on this early exploration. An exciting dialog regarding important themes (e.g., compassion, vocational calling, intrinsic motivation, stress) emerged. Creative discourse between social science, religious sociology, and (to a lesser extent) theology was taking place. High-quality journals began to accept scholarly contributions dealing with this interdisciplinary nexus. There was a movement beyond simply focusing on individual spirituality and its relationship to mature leadership functioning toward including assessment of corporate cultures that benefited from spiritual values.

Where Do We Go From Here

I would like to illustrate using one frontier issue critical in our contemporary organizational life to suggest how spirituality might enrich emergent management theory in the future. A recent IBM Foundation report (Capitalizing on Complexity: Insights From the Global Chief Executive Officers Study 2010) studied 1,542 CEOs and senior executives across 60 countries and 30 industries. The report identified the management of complexity associated with rapid change as *the* dominant contemporary organizational challenge. The research also found better than two thirds of the leaders studied did not feel at ease in managing this challenge.

The report suggested three important elements needed to be part of an effective coping strategy. There is a need to (1) embody creative leadership inviting and encouraging participation in disruptive innovation from all parts of the organization, (2) include the customer as a participant in cocreation of creative solutions, and (3) constantly revamp operations including the ability to rapidly scale up or down. This important study takes the need for empowerment and decentralization to an entirely new level. It breaks any remaining ties to monocratic, hierarchical leadership as a sole locus of organization change. Let me suggest just three potential ways spiritual resources that could enrich reflections regarding this critical contemporary challenge:

1. At a time when celebrity personalities and degradation due to hubris dominates headlines, the IBM forecast implies the need for psychological/spiritual maturity

on the part of leaders who must be able to celebrate the gifts of others and engage in pooled judgments within shared discernment in order to accomplish creative and innovative responses.

It takes generosity to discover the whole through others. If you realize you are only a violin, you can open yourself to the world by playing your role in the concert.

Jacques Yves Cousteau,
www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors
/j/jacques_yves_**cousteau**.html

 The spiritual traditions possess deep wisdom regarding taming the ego as a prelude to respecting and listening to others. Their worldview celebrates appropriate humility as opposed to undue aggrandizing of power. Spirituality biography is rich in documentation of selfless service. Equally important, spiritual disciplines inclusive of many forms of meditation and prayer show demonstrable attitudinal and neurological changes that help to protect a leader from self-absorbing narcissism (Thomas et al. 2010). Thus, a well-developed spiritual worldview with accompanying disciplines can serve as a powerful antidote to the temptations faced by the celebrity personality and the abuse of leadership power which nullify effective inclusive problem solving.

The first step in forming a discerning mind is becoming aware of the preconceptions and urgencies that conduct the mind toward an all-too-tidy consistence marked more by its narrowness than its wisdom. … If the mind is uncultured and narrow in its interests and if it is easily moved by impulses of which it is unaware, then the bias with which it interprets reality will be quite imperceptible to it.

Reflection on Origen, *First Principles 4.2.2* Mark A. Macintosh,
Discernment and Truth, New York, Crossroad Publishing, 2004 p.83

2. The IBM forecast suggests that all participants must be able to engage in deep listening, not only for the organization to accommodate client needs across highly varied clientele segments but even to include the clients own giftedness in codevelopment of new solutions.

Block your mouth,
Shut the doors or eyes and ears,
And you will have fullness within.
Open your mouth,
Be always busy,
And you're beyond hope!

Lao Tzu (570–490 BC)
www.spiritual-wholeness.org
/mystic/text/non_ac2.htm

This suggests that a deeper power sharing based on empathy, compassion, and mutual discovery is necessary in order to meet important human needs in the context of rapid change. A shift moving organizational leadership away from provider push toward client pull needs to occur. Concern for profits will remain as an important discipline and a measure regarding efficiency and effectiveness. However, in the future, energy must first be directed to cocreating innovative

responses to real needs discovered in partnership with those the organization serves. This is very much reinforced by spiritual worldviews where service to neighbor is paramount. Again, spiritual disciplines such as meditation allow for deeper listening, greater focus on the needs of others, and less concern with personal prominence and control.

…Discernment is not a giving away of something that we can well afford to lose. It goes much deeper than that. It is a putting away of something of what we are: our old self, with its all too-human, all too-worldly prejudices, convictions, attitudes, values, ways of thinking and acting; habits that have become so much a part of us that it is agony even to think of parting with them, and yet which are precisely what prevent us from rightly interpreting the signs of the times, from seeing life steadily and seeing it whole.

Pedro Arrupe, *Essential Writings*,
Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books, pp 95–96

3. Both of the above suggest that attention to a broader concept of community and the common good must underlie successful innovation in the future. Narrow, self-centered attention to select stakeholders would impede this evolution.

Community conceived in a truly "unitive" sense, that is, community of humankind and cosmos, is an elevated state of spiritual development to be sure. Even within the religious traditions growth into such nondualism is an advanced spiritual achievement often associated with mysticism. Yet, in a world divided by race, ethnicity, nation state, religious tradition, etc. – divided by endless psychic borders – the need for such elevated spiritual maturity is increasingly critical. Think of problems associated with sustainability to name just one iconic challenge that will require greater attention to truly communitarian solutions.

The struggle is to live in torn, divided and highly polarized communities, as wounded persons ourselves, and carry that tension without resentment, to be healers and peacemakers rather than simply responding in kind.

The struggle to live, love and forgive beyond the infectious ideologies that we daily inhale, i.e., the struggle for true sincerity, to genuinely know and follow our own hearts and minds beyond what is prescribed to us by the right and the left, to be neither liberal nor conservative but rather men and women of true compassion.

Ronald Rohheiser, *To Be Fully Human,* Reported by John Allen,
National Catholic Reporter, May 25, 2011

Summing Up

I named but one emergent managerial challenge, coping with complexity and the need for rapid change, to illustrate how spiritual maturity needs to be joined to psychological and social maturity. I could have chosen any number other examples. For instance, at the individual level of analysis, a central health challenge is stress. Studies show that religious worldviews and practices are important means of reducing stress (Ibid). At the group level, I could have mentioned the need for sensitive and supportive interpersonal relationships, a litmus test of organizational spirituality. Spiritual insights and disciplines create the capacity for greater interpersonal sensitivity and servant leadership. The point is that no matter what managerial problem one wishes to

investigate, if it is a significant challenge, there will be a human dimension for which echoes are found in the great spiritual traditions. Such problems invite us to use all the intellectual resources at our command. It is a great consolation at the autumn of my career to find it is now legitimate and valued by many within the academy to juxtapose knowledge from spiritual and religious traditions with knowledge from management studies and social sciences. We can now seek to integrate body, mind, and spirit into the struggle to bring light into our managerial world.

So as we move from prognostication toward living more holistically into each day, the juxtaposition of management with insights from spirituality and religion holds much promise.

> The best way to take care of the future is to take care of the present moment. Practicing conscious breathing, aware of each thought and each act, we are reborn, fully alive, in the present moment. We needn't abandon our hope entirely, but unless we channel our energies towards being aware of what is going on in the present moment, we might not discover the peace and happiness that are available right now. The well is within us. If we dig deeply in the present moment, the water will spring forth.
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> Thich Nhat Hanh, 'Living Buddha Living Christ', New York, Riverhead Books, l995 p. 179.

Look to this day,
For it is life.
The very life of life.
In its brief course lie all
The realities and verities of existence.
The bliss of growth.
The splendour of action.
The glory of power.
For yesterday is but a dream.
And tomorrow is only a vision:
But today well lived
Makes every yesterday a dream of happiness
And every tomorrow a vision of hope.
Look well therefore, to this day.

Drawn from the Vedas: The Salutation to the Dawn
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