
Philip Mirvis: Fusing Radical Humanism and Organizational Spirituality in a Boundaryless Career

54

Tojo Thatchenkery and Param Srikantia

Abstract

This chapter explores the distinctive contributions of Phil Mirvis, an organizational psychologist who has skillfully fused radical humanism and organizational spirituality in what can be best described as a boundaryless career. The boundaryless label captures the character of his contributions that defy categorization as they seamlessly weave together theoretical imagination, research-oriented creativity, and practical ingenuity while integrating multiple epistemologies and methods, including within his ambit individual, group, and societal levels of functioning, in addition to attending to both the tangible and intangible dimensions of organizational functioning. After reviewing some dominant influences and defining moments that shaped his career, the chapter explores Mirvis's contributions in five thematic dimensions of organizational life, namely (a) large-scale organizational change, (b) mergers and acquisitions, (c) the character of the workforce and workplace, (d) leadership development, and (e) the role of business in society. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Mirvis's key insights and legacies that include but are not limited to his work on failures in OD work as opportunities for new understandings, his elaboration of learning journeys as an instrument of promoting emotional and spiritual self-actualization in business contexts and his amplification of the compatibility of organizational cultures as a determinant of success in mergers and acquisitions.

T. Thatchenkery (✉)
George Mason University, Arlington, VA, USA
e-mail: thatchen@gmu.edu

P. Srikantia
School of Business, Baldwin Wallace University, Berea, OH, USA
e-mail: psrikant@bw.edu

Keywords

Organization development • Change management • Spirituality • Scholar-practitioner • Large systems transformation • Mergers & acquisitions • Workforce development • Business & society • Leadership development

Contents

Introduction	904
Influences and Motivations Artful Creative Rebellion	905
Key Contributions: The Transformation of Consciousness in Large Systems	907
New Insights: Synergistic Integration of Divergent Modalities	913
Legacies and Unfinished Business: Transcending Polarities in a Boundaryless Career	916
Conclusion	918
References	918

Introduction

Philip H. Mirvis is an organizational psychologist who has built bridges between research, theory, and practice to make deep and enduring contributions in five thematic dimensions of organizational life: (a) large-scale organizational change, (b) mergers and acquisitions, (c) the character of the workforce and workplace, (d) leadership development, and (e) the role of business in society. In each of these domains he has introduced new concepts and frameworks while also inventing organizational interventions and dynamic action research practices. A self-described “jack of many trades,” he has studied and helped to stimulate different kinds of organizational sense-making not dependent on any particular methodological device or epistemology. Much of his change scholarship is drawn from his consulting work and field research with large and innovative organizations around the world. He has operated in academic, business, consulting, and research roles, freely navigating the unique challenges of each of these domains with energy and insight (see his writings on issues in scholarship and practice). He situates himself today, first and foremost, as a reflective practitioner.

Mirvis has a B.A. from Yale University and a Ph.D. in Organizational Psychology from the University of Michigan. In early career, he was a professor in the School of Management at Boston University and held research posts at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, the Center for Applied Social Science at Boston University, and (part time a decade ago) at the Center for Corporate Citizenship at Boston College. He has been a visiting professor at Jiao Tong University in Shanghai, China, and the London Business School, and has contributed to executive education programs at universities and in businesses on six continents. For the past 25 years, Mirvis has operated as an “independent” consultant and researcher. He is relocating to Santa Fe, New Mexico, with his wife, Mary Jo Hatch, a renowned organizational theorist, prolific author of influential books, and recently retired professor from the McIntire School of Commerce at the University of Virginia.

Influences and Motivations Artful Creative Rebellion

As scholarship is to some extent autobiographical, the tenor of Mirvis's independent, nonconforming, and antiauthoritarian orientation was evident early in his life when, for example, he refused to document his long division calculations to his insistent fourth grade teacher in a Catholic grammar school and was later expelled for failing to comply with what appeared to him to be rigid and mindless rules. This orientation continued to grow during the 1960s when his public high school in Columbus, Ohio, was racially integrated, and Mirvis was suspended for running an "underground" student newspaper that challenged prevailing taboos on everything from interracial dating to wearing blue jeans to school. After he joined the undergraduate program at Yale, this "us-against-them" world view was expanded into activism by consciousness raising from faculty and students and participation in campus teach-ins and the "May Day" protests over the dubious murder trial of Bobby Seale of the Black Panthers in New Haven (where he also learned of the shootings of antiwar protestors at Kent State University). These experiences and the general climate of anti-establishment protest met by state repression appear to have ignited a strong desire in him to not only rail against but also to reform social and institutional realities.

Mirvis was first initiated into the field of organizational change during his undergraduate years as a psychology and administrative science major. He was introduced to more humanistic organizational psychology concepts through a directed reading course with Richard Hackman, participated in various T-group experiences, and was exposed to organization development (OD) and change practices by Yale faculty (including Chris Argyris and Clay Alderfer) and campus visitors such as Harvey Hornstein and Saul Alinsky. His "revolutionary" zeal (an attribute that would exercise a subterranean influence in his organizational change work later on) became focused through his coursework on "freeing" workers from the tyranny of oppressive managers and organizations. At the same time, he came to realize that OD was a "double-edged sword" that was capable of both energizing human emancipation and potentially pacifying working people, thus serving the interests of the so-called ruling elite.

Tough and troubling questions about supposedly "value-free" organizational concepts and the varied "uses" and "misuses" of OD interventions appear in Mirvis's writing about ethics in organizational research, values in change efforts, and consciousness raising in executive development (see *Company as Total Community*). His own personal dilemmas on these fronts (on teaching in a business school, advising senior managers, and consulting on large-scale mergers) are reported in his autobiographical writings (see *Midlife as a Consultant*) and more recently in a book on "intellectual shamans" by Sandra Waddock (2015).

Right after graduating from college, Mirvis sought to enact his "save the worker" aspirations by joining the US Department of Labor and participating in a study led by Neal Herrick to assess the economic costs of "bad" management in employee absences, grievances, and the like. Mirvis was joined in this investigation by colleague Barry Macy, a former Alcoa executive, and also met regularly Labor Department advisors Eric Trist, Warren Bennis, and Edward Lawler. Connecting

with these luminaries, learning how they wrestled with questions of reform versus cooptation in their own work, and seeing them as role models led Mirvis toward an academic career path. Lawler encouraged him to apply to the Ph.D. program in the organizational psychology department at the University of Michigan and to join his Quality of Work Life (QWL) program based at the Institute for Social Research.

Mirvis was deeply influenced by Lawler's capacity to mix research and consulting fluently within the context of his academic career and also was his tenant (in Lawler's home) for several of his graduate study years. He benefitted immensely from the creative tension between schisms in the doctoral program at Michigan. One camp of students favored rigorous empirical research in established topic niches while another was more discovery-oriented, exploratory, and engaged in more qualitative studies that were higher on practical relevance. Lawler had blazed his trail betwixt these poles as an "action researcher" with his well-known studies of plant start-ups at TRW, Procter & Gamble, General Foods, and Honda and as a practical scholar in studying the impact of Quality of Work Life programs on working people and their organization.

A seminar at Michigan led by psychoanalyst Michael Maccoby became a pivotal point for Mirvis's self-definition. Maccoby argued passionately about how the "interior life" of managers shaped their actions and how context was crucial in understanding organizational dynamics. These ideas resonated and further reinforced Mirvis's appetite for activism and applied work that aimed at broad, meaningful change rather than addressing microscopic questions. Mirvis began to inhabit the role of a "reflective practitioner," exploring "artful" change methodologies and gaining insights into the interplay of one's own psyche and the role of social construction in how action research projects are selected, framed, executed, and interpreted.

After earning his Ph.D., Mirvis went to Boston University where he taught in the management school while simultaneously working at the Center for Applied Social Science with senior faculty Gerry Gordon, Mike Useem, and Robert Chin (who would be another mentor and guide him on his first overseas teaching and research in China). His research in these years examined multiple levers of organizational change including the impact of computer technology on office and factory workers, work-life balance initiatives, and his first studies of corporate mergers and acquisitions (M&A). He designed and executed several survey feedback and action research projects with Amy Sales and Edward Hackett.

It was perhaps a blessing in disguise that Mirvis was denied tenure at Boston University in what appears to have been a process influenced by political differences and tensions related to his activism against University President John Silber and his involvement in the faculty union as a steward for the School of Management (though Mirvis also notes that his antiauthoritarian streak led him challenge proposals by the School's associate dean and a department chair which would hamper the promotion prospects of any nontenured faculty member). The denial of tenure marked his full-blown entry into the world of what he would call "scholarly practice," initiating a string of consulting assignments in M&A, human capital development, and the social responsibilities of business.

His writing also reflected a different style relative to mainstream academic research literature in organizational behavior and change. The style was more spontaneous, organic, incorporating qualitative information and case study material and demonstrating a greater concern with questions of practical impact. Mirvis's scholarship demonstrates methodological eclecticism, featuring case studies, interviews, and shared reflections that take on a story telling quality, capturing significant lessons derived from organizational interventions. His research studies have involved an extensive array of collaborators from multiple continents drawn from universities, business, and consulting. The research is typically focused on investigating real world issues, talking with organizational participants, and constructing comprehensive learning histories that capture the social, emotional, and task-centered dimensions of change interventions undertaken in their companies.

Another event of great importance in Mirvis's life was a workshop that he attended led by Scott Peck, M.D., author of the best-selling book, *The Road Less Travelled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth*. Mirvis remembers this as a very important part of helping him to confront his knee-jerk antiauthority reactions and to "heal" from the denial of his tenure. Through his 10-year association with Peck and colleagues in the Foundation for Community Encouragement, Mirvis gained skills in dealing with powerful male authority figures and also introduced a spiritual dimension into his work. It expanded his epistemology and ontology, making him more open to varied forms of sense-making and stimulated his writing on *Soul Work* and *Community Building* in organizations.

Key Contributions: The Transformation of Consciousness in Large Systems

As noted in the introduction, Mirvis has integrated and made meaningful contributions to theory, research, and practice along five thematic dimensions of organizational life. In this section, the discussion of key contributions is organized according to these five thematic dimensions, namely: (a) large-scale organizational change, (b) mergers and acquisitions, (c) the character of the workforce and workplace, (d) leadership development and consciousness-raising, and (e) the role of business in society.

- (a) **Large-scale organizational change:** Mirvis has been a prolific contributor to enriching our understanding of large-scale organizational change. He has approached this domain from multiple angles and through multiple lenses. One of his early provocative contributions to the OD and change discipline was the book he coedited with David Berg titled *Failures in Organizational Development and Change: Cases and Essays for Learning*. It pointed out very correctly that while OD scholars had written extensively on the failings of organizations, the field had not been very reflective on its own failures. The *Failures* book speaks to the minds and hearts of OD scholars and practitioners as it features first-person essays chronicling failures by leading figures in OD, identifies where they went wrong and why, and highlights specific lessons learned. The various

chapters explore some of the most important sources of OD failure including the absence of shared understandings during entry, resistance to change embedded in cultural hostility, intergroup conflict, hidden authority relationships, and bureaucratization of change processes. The volume helped to promote critical self-examination and a learning-from-errors orientation to the field. By focusing on failings, it also sought to promote healthy skepticism and continuous improvement to the field of OD, the very qualities that OD strives to entrench in organizations.

Mirvis has also fashioned himself as an “amateur” historian and presented useful and insightful perspectives on the evolution of OD from the 1960s to 1980s. OD in the 1960s represented more of a human relations perspective and philosophy, a set of values celebrating human potential in organizations, consistent with Theory Y assumptions of McGregor and self-actualization insights drawn from Maslow. The OD consultant’s focus in that era was on creating a deeper alignment between the individual needs and organizational needs. Mirvis traces how this emphasis shifted in the 1970s during the “technostructural” era in which the perceived looseness of the field was rejected in favor of more formalized organizational interventions that attempted to increase the synergy between technology, organizational structure, and the sociotechnical dimensions. This was also the period in which university departments for training OD professionals were established.

According to Mirvis, the evolution of OD continued with another swing of the historical pendulum, this time in favor of recognizing and according the environment a much bigger role in organizational effectiveness and resilience. Changes in technology, ownership, structure, and strategy demanded significant developments in environmental scanning, stakeholder analysis, and business planning. The firm level focus of OD had to be expanded to allow for a greater recognition of interorganizational networks involving mergers, acquisitions, and other cooperative arrangements. In projecting the future of OD through the 1990s, Mirvis was remarkably accurate in forecasting greater integration of seemingly contradictory perspectives that would strive to embody and transcend the apparent paradoxes in organizing such as the ones between internal and external aspects of the organization or control and flexibility as the basis of culture (Denison and Spreitzer 1991).

Mirvis also wrote two papers about “revolutionary” developments in the field celebrating, for example, the innovative contributions of Barry Oshry with his power labs, Bill Torbert’s Theatre of Inquiry, and more recent contributions concerned with art-based and spiritual forms of intervention. Of particular interest is his distinction between evolutionary and revolutionary perspectives on the history of OD. Evolutionary perspectives and revolutionary perspectives can be contrasted according to four dimensions. For example, evolutionary perspectives have represented a *knowledge base* that is cumulative and universalistic, a *movement* that has been scientific and utilitarian, a *client base* that has been logical and pragmatic, and *OD practice and practitioners* that have been

market-driven and professional. In sharp contradistinction to this is the depiction of a revolutionary perspective to OD in which the *knowledge base* is contextual and particularistic, a *movement* that is humanistic and value-based, a *client base* that is explorative and experimental, and *OD practice and practitioners* that are visionary and free-spirited. These four bipolar categories structure two sharply contrasting perspectives on the history of OD and reflect a deep understanding of the need for integrating and embracing seemingly contradictory orientations. A recent paper on 50 years of contributions to the *Journal of Applied Behavior Science (JABS at 50)* provides a more expansive summary of the academic side of the field.

- (b) **Mergers and acquisitions:** Early on in his career when Mirvis was at Boston University, he and his colleague Mitchell Marks were invited by W. Michael Blumenthal, then CEO of Burroughs Corporation, to facilitate the human integration in what was the largest hostile takeover in US corporate history at that time. This engagement, involving the creation of Unisys, marked the beginning of what would become a storied career in M&A consulting. His scholarly work in this domain concerned the “merger syndrome” – a term coined to highlight a range of merger dynamics including: human resistance; explication of the integration of structures and processes involved in a merger; the much publicized concept of the clash of company cultures, and insight into the subsequent acculturation phase that mark several successful mergers. He has coauthored (with Marks) several books such as *Managing the Merger* and *Joining Forces: Making One Plus One Equal Three in Mergers, Acquisitions and Alliances*, and scholarly research articles capturing the lessons learned (outlined in the bibliography ending this chapter).

Marks and Mirvis (2001) analyzed their experience in over 70 mergers and acquisitions to discern characteristics that differentiate successful from unsuccessful combinations. While noting that three of four mergers fail in terms of their core financial and strategic objectives, the study pointed to importance of managing the strategic and psychological elements in the “precombination phase.” In their words:

The strategic challenges concern key analyses that clarify and bring into focus the sources of synergy in a combination. This involves reality testing of potential synergies in light of the two sides’ structures and cultures and establishing the desired relationship between the two companies. And the psychological challenges cover actions required to understand the mindsets that people bring with them and develop over the course of a combination. This means raising people’s awareness of and capacities to respond to the normal and to-be-expected stresses and strains of living through a combination. (p. 80)

To this point, most of the focus in M&A scholarship and practice concerned “post-merger” integration. This experience-based study also stimulated scholars and practitioners to give fuller attention to “premerger” issues (which, as the authors point out, is complicated because of legal requirements for secrecy and the inability to bring the two parties together). Mirvis writes about several

premerger sessions with companies that helped them forestall culture clashes and, in a couple of cases, back out of the deal because of cultural misfits. All of this highlights the value of insights gained from “hands-on” engagement with practitioners.

- (c) **The character of the workforce and workplace:** Mirvis also explored characteristics of the workforce and the workplace from his early days of working with Edward Lawler to more recent investigations of the “boundaryless” career with Douglas (Tim) Hall. Along the way he studied the financial impact of employee attitudes, the import of demographic changes on work attitudes, the rise of cynicism in the US workforce and society, and matters of work-life integration. Many of his writings provide useful pointers to practitioners on these strategic human resources management issues and themes.

One of Mirvis’s enduring contributions was contributing to the Organizational Assessment Package (OAP) at Michigan and coediting a volume on methods and measurement tools for assessing organization change. His leadership in two national surveys of US employee attitudes and the Louis Harris and Associates’ *Laborforce 2000* survey also yielded data-based understandings of conditions in the workforce and workplace and documented the impact of progressive work designs, management practices, and employee engagement strategies.

While schooled in traditional research designs and survey methods, Mirvis came to question the merits of “scientific” research methods during his graduate study years. Guided first by Donald Michael, who wrote provocatively about the limits of technology assessments, Mirvis authored a series of papers reframing assessment as an art rather than as a science. In these, he goes about systematically taking apart the often unacknowledged fallacies and absurdities of the logical positivist assumptions that have bedeviled approaches to assessment. For example, in an early contribution titled “The Art of Assessing the Quality of Life as Work: A Personal Essay with Notes,” Mirvis (1980) makes some conceptually elegant and intriguing arguments for embracing artistic imagination, empathy, and intuition as a necessary and legitimate component of a valid, reliable, and holistic evaluation.

The essay is a critique from a philosophy of science perspective on how the study of organizations, workers, and work itself has been distorted to fit into the Procrustean bed of the organization scientist’s templates and rational mental models. A more ecologically grounded and holistically expansive perspective could emerge if only the researchers would allow the organic phenomenology of the worker, the nonrational and unconscious forces at work in organizations, and the recognition of workers and organizations as entities imbued with unique characteristics of their own. His recommendation that we unabashedly “rely on our intimate and personal knowledge of human behavior to derive models of work and working people” (p. 472) represented a bold departure from the canons of standard scientific research at that time while demonstrating how this expansion of our attitude would actually result in more valid and accurate depictions of organizational and worker realities.

In one of the most significant reinterpretations of a classic study, Mirvis revisits the results and analysis of the classic Hawthorne experiments and demonstrates how the researchers missed very important lessons from the bank wiring room experiments because of the narrowness engendered by their academic socialization. In Mirvis's (1980) words:

Had they gone further...they would have conceived of the changes as an emergent work form and experienced the euphoria of the women as an indication of their quality of life at work...Moreover, if it is to be believed that the Hawthorne studies and the ensuing predictions that better "care" of workers would lead to human and economic improvements helped to stimulate the human relations movement in organizations, an alternative and more compelling interpretation of the findings might have changed the quality of work life itself in the subsequent four decades! (p. 483)

His vision of assessment as a subliminal integration of the artistic and scientific appreciation of work and his detailed elucidation of how to carry out such assessments is a powerful blueprint for a revolution in assessment studies that incorporates the imagination and lived experience of the workers themselves and is carried out by researchers who are real human beings, fully inhabiting their subjectivity, as opposed to dispassionate, passive observers of the objects of their studies.

- (d) **Leadership Development and Consciousness Raising:** Informed by his exploration of the spiritual and aesthetic dimensions of organization life and practice, Mirvis began to incorporate these dimensions consciously into his intervention work in the late 1990s. *To the Desert and Back: The Story of One of the Most Dramatic Business Transformations on Record* describes his work with the British/Dutch consumer product conglomerate, Unilever. During his 1-year stint at the London Business School at the invitation of Sumantra Ghoshal, Mirvis was contacted by Louis "Tex" Gunning, who was running the Dutch side of Unilever foods, and invited to design and conduct community building retreats in the Ardennes, Scotland, and Middle East. Mirvis's experience at facilitating these "journeys" represents a radically innovative methodology, linking community building with deep "soul work" and consciousness raising in executives and in organizations. These journeys involve actual instances of travel of intact divisions or management teams to distant locations, sets of both planned and spontaneously occurring events and activities during the sojourn all of which would then become a springboard for new insights relevant to grasping underlying organizational dynamics.

Through a "behind the scenes" perspective, he was able to identify multiple ways in which performing arts can provide the impetus for large-scale organizational change. As one example, nearly 1600 of the Unilever employees were taken in buses, without prior indication of destination, to a factory setting in which they witnessed aisles and aisles of food that was wasted and spoiled. The team then disposed of the food through a burial ceremony. This incorporation of such scripted as well as spontaneous sequences and ceremony interspersed with

collective sharing and sense-making processes breathed dynamism, emotion, and vitality into their workplace. Speaking of this interweaving of performance arts into management consulting, Mirvis et al. (2001) write:

In the language of the arts and the emerging discipline of performance studies, the events described might be termed performances. In each instance, the actions of the leaders and staff are more or less scripted and unfold through scenes. The events themselves are staged, with scenery and actors in place, costumes and props ready, and the chairman cum director exerting a strong or light hand, depending on the performance. The parallels between process and performance are striking: the latter also involves an arrangement of activities across time and space, dramatization with a beginning and end, and activity, termed by scholars of the genre as performativity, that pulls it all together (Carlson 1996). This distinction may seem moot. In everyday language, people speak easily of the “art of leadership,” read about management as a “performing art,” and move toward craftsmanship in labor, harmony in teamwork, and “world-class performance. But to lift up and focus specifically on the performative aspects of leadership, we believe, offers a fresh, useful way to see, understand, and undertake organizational change. (p. 24)

His work is an invitation to organizational change practitioners to expand their creativity in leveraging dramaturgy and the performing arts more powerfully in their work even while seeking to unravel the mystery of organizational change through the metaphor of change as theater.

Mirvis also collaborated with Karen Ayas, from the Society for Organizational Learning, to work with Gunning in Unilever’s operations in Asia, further developing what is a unique contribution to organizational studies, namely cutting edge experiential learning work in which participants live through shared organizational experiences, internalizing them and living them in the “here and now” followed by phases of storytelling about what is happening to them. In the words of Mirvis:

One intervention of interest is a “learning journey” in which hundreds of leaders in a company travel together to inform their strategies and intentions. The journeys, lasting up to a week, are multilayered, multisensory experiences that engage the head, heart, body, and spirit. They are tribal gatherings in that we typically wake at dawn, dress in local garb, exercise or meditate together, hike from place to place, eat communally, swap stories by the campfire, and sleep alongside one another in tents. In our daily experiences, we might meet monks or a martial arts master, talk with local children or village elders, or simply revel in the sounds and sights of nature. We spend considerable time in personal and collective reflections about who we are as a community, what we are seeing, and what this means for our work together. Throughout a journey, a team of researchers prepares a “learning history” that documents key insights for continued reflection. (Mirvis 2006, pp. 81–82)

These methods have also been incorporated into the design of innovative leadership development programs. Mentored by Noel Tichy in the use of action learning in “project based” leadership development programs, Mirvis has championed the design and development of these programs in Intel, Ford Motor Co., Shell Oil, Novo Nordisk, Wipro (India), and CP (Thailand). His

ability to inject theater and the performing arts into organizational interventions and to lead outdoor leadership experiences has led to a number of extremely creative consulting interventions in exotic locations spanning all the way from the Rockies, Pyrenees, Alps, and Himalayas. He has developed and orchestrated corporate learning and growth journeys coupled with community service projects in the “urban” USA, Paris, London, Sao Paulo, Tallinn, Estonia, rural India, China, Vietnam, in Greenland, and among aboriginal people in Borneo, Paraguay, and Australia.

In bringing “soul work” to corporations that are thought to be essentially devoid of soul and obsessed with the bottom line, Mirvis’s contribution demonstrates the potential for community and spirituality at the workplace. It is a very promising indication that organizations and their leaders can be responsive to radically humanistic interventions.

- (e) **Role of business in society:** Mirvis’s scholarly and consulting career reflects an enduring interest in the role of business in society, beginning with his early, defining experiences with Ben and Jerry’s, then with Royal Dutch Shell amidst the Brent Spar crisis, and finally with Unilever as it embarked on its sustainability journey. One of his “academic” stints was to join with Bradley Googins at the Center for Corporate Citizenship which afforded him a unique opportunity to study hundreds of companies in the development of their relationship to society. Mirvis has written extensively on the stages of development of corporate social responsibility (CSR), enhancing employee engagement through CSR and social innovations that simultaneously promote both societal and business objectives. He conducted the International Survey of Corporate Citizenship (2003–2009) and was the author of an annual ranking of the top corporate citizens in the world and in the USA in association with the Reputation Institute (2008–2010). His scholarly work has been paralleled by real world engagement at senior levels of corporate leadership working with Ben and Jerry’s Ice Cream, Unilever, the SK Group (Korea), IBM, PepsiCo, and Mitsubishi (Japan) among others.

New Insights: Synergistic Integration of Divergent Modalities

In terms of Burrell and Morgan’s (1979) *Sociological Paradigms of Organizational Analysis*, Mirvis’s scholarship and practice can be situated in the Radical Humanist quadrant of organizational paradigms, espousing a conception of reality as socially constructed (not objectively constituted) and a commitment to exploring the potential for change in making organizations more responsive to human needs and aspirations (as opposed to continuity and maintenance of the existing order). For all of us whose scholarship and practices derives its inspiration from a Radical Humanist model of organizations, Mirvis’s commitment to the potential for emancipatory scholarship has been a great source for inspiration. Given that the majority of scholars in the organizational studies field who undergo intellectual socialization in US business school espouse logical positivism, Mirvis’s work blazes a trail from which all of us who are committed to an alternative framing of organizations can find

intellectual and spiritual nourishment. He has by his prolific scholarship, imaginative theorizing, and creative consulting demonstrated the intellectual vitality, generativity and aliveness of a radically humanist view of organizations. His scholarship can be used as a model to help embryonic researchers in doctoral programs to see for themselves the unique insights that can emerge from qualitative research that embraces methodological pluralism and multiple epistemologies.

Mirvis's contribution lies at the intersection of at least five distinct well-defined literature streams within the discipline of organizational studies, and his work enriches each one of these tributaries of specialized scholarship in research, theory, and practice. First, there is the organization change and development (ODC) literature that focuses on the effective management of planned organizational changes designed to enhance the problem-solving capabilities of organizations. Mirvis's exploration of different organizational change interventions, his studies of failure in OD, and his research into large-scale organization change would align appropriately here. Second, there is the organizational behavior and organizational theory streams (OB and OT) that deal with the micro and macro aspects of organizational life with the intent of studying existing processes from a research and scholarly perspective. Mirvis's numerous studies on the character of the workforce and workplace summarized earlier exemplify and enrich these streams of scholarly literature in the organizational studies. Third, there is a growing movement exploring the spirituality dimensions of organizational life (MSR), and Mirvis's work on leadership and consciousness development reflects a profound appreciation of the spiritual dimension. His early work in this area is also tied to the recent emphasis on well-being in organizations (Davies 2016; Bishop 2016; Conyers and Wilson 2015; Bojanowska and Zalewska 2016). Fourth, his research connects with the strong literature arising from the recognition among scholars of the ways in which bureaucracies involve asymmetrical power relationships that privilege some constituencies and associated world views at the expense of some others. Mirvis's work, based on his early defining experiences, demonstrates a consistent commitment to creating egalitarian structures based on power equalization and this commitment is widely diffused throughout his research, scholarship, and practice. Finally, the proliferation of studies on corporate social responsibility (CSR) constitutes another clearly defined research stream that absorbs Mirvis's work on the role of business in society. CSR and the role of businesses in creating (or destroying) a sustainable environment and economy have become one of the most visible areas of research and action today (Moon 2015; Eichar 2015). Mirvis's work had a significant impact in stimulating interest in this topic when it was in its early stages.

Personal Reflections I (Thatchenkery) deeply resonated with Mirvis's work on several counts and I would like to highlight just a few of the broader similarities in orientation and conceptual spaces that Mirvis and I share at the level of core interests and commitments. Paralleling my interest in the social constructionist perspective on organizations, Mirvis is also comfortably aligned with a social constructionist perspective that examines organizations as sociocultural productions that arise from consensus and rooted in social processes and subjective meaning making

processes. Reflecting my interest in Appreciative Inquiry and contributions in Appreciative Intelligence[®], Mirvis is similarly committed to understanding what provides energy and vitality to organizational systems. I have also attempted to create synergy between action learning, sensitivity training, and experiential learning, a trinity that constitutes a very fertile area of creative experimentation for Mirvis in both theory and practice. Mirvis's foray into the social responsibilities of business is similarly echoed by my own intellectual excursion into the theme of positive design, sustainability, and sustainable value.

Equally important is another quality that Mirvis has modeled for all of us, namely professional courage. When faced with senior organizational leaders who may have a very narrow focus on bottom line profitability, Mirvis's work on learning journeys and performance art can help OD practitioners make a credible case for transcending the obsession with short-term or immediate measurable business outcomes and create a space for exploring alternative methods for reenergizing management teams. Similarly, Mirvis's work on failures in OD empowers us all to be more playful and adventurous in framing and designing interventions, and reminds us that without the permission to fail, no real creativity is possible. For all those of us who see ourselves as exponents of the Positive Organizational Scholarship tributary of organizational research, we can all build on the multiple ways in which Mirvis has dedicated his life to discovering the hidden life forces that give vitality and momentum to human organizing when the constraints of rationality, rigid bureaucracy, and mechanistic thinking are transcended.

On a more personal note, I (Tojo Thatchenkery) have known Phil since my doctoral studies at Case Western. My mentor Suresh Srivastva used to organize seminar series where leading thinkers in organization studies were invited to participate for a few days with doctoral students and invited scholars on the latest thinking in the field. All of us were assigned to "shadow" a scholar and I was lucky to be assigned to Phil. I still remember the excitement of meeting someone who spoke his mind and challenged everyone around him not to be afraid and to say what they were truly thinking. He taught me how to disagree with respect but not to give in. I observed that Phil had genuine credibility because he "walked the talk." He did not preach anything that he was not doing himself. While listening to my dissertation ideas which included appreciative inquiry, Phil encouraged me to listen with empathy and an open mind, and to be prepared for surprises.

Later on, as I moved to the Washington DC area to start my academic career at George Mason University, I was delighted to find that Phil lived in the area. Thus began our long-term friendship where I could meet him as frequently as I wanted (he was very generous with his time) and share what I was working on and receive insightful feedback. Phil believed in relationships rather than playing a formal role. He would invite me to watch the Washington Wizards game as his guest (he was an ardent fan of the team) and many of our productive dialogues happened during the dinner before or after the game. I felt Phil's presence most rewarding because he had a gift of offering feedback without judging. I was able to launch a few risky initiatives early in my academic career because Phil coached me in doing so. The courage I had gained since then stays with me today.

Personal Reflections As the coauthor, I (Param Srikantia) would like to register my deep gratitude to Mirvis for several facets of his work that have been a source of inspiration to me. I deliver a seminar titled *Beyond Emotional Intelligence: The Manager as an Enlightened Presence* which is based on the work of the legendary Indian mystic Osho, to managers of Fortune 500 companies in several cities through the international training organization, Institute of Management studies (IMS). The seminar, based on Eastern perspectives embodied in Osho's books and discourses, engages managers in inner work that crosses many of the same organizational and tacit boundaries that Mirvis describes in his experiments with the management teams of Unilever. Participants engage in deep emotional sharing, going beyond social masks and exploring how their managerial styles were shaped by the emotional challenges they encountered in their childhood.

Mirvis's work has given me enormous moral support, creative fuel, and professional courage in promoting this brand of inner self-exploration to managerial populations normally unaccustomed to such public displays of emotional authenticity. It has also given me a solid platform to stand on in speaking to business audiences, knowing that the modality of transforming managerial consciousness is one that has been successfully attempted in the history of OD.

Legacies and Unfinished Business: Transcending Polarities in a Boundaryless Career

Mirvis's distinctive accomplishment has been his ability to engage with the seemingly irreconcilable tensions between research and action and to craft a role as a scholarly practitioner. He has been able, by virtue of his own personal example, to demonstrate that it is possible for a scholarly practitioner to enjoy a level of recognized success within academia. He has been able to integrate the best of what the real world offers in terms of conceptually challenging consulting work with the theoretical heights that a scholar can scale by developing experientially grounded lessons derived from the field. Further, crafting novel and unusual interventions and learning events encourages OD professionals and change agents to think and act more creatively and provocatively. To sum his contributions:

- His book with Berg on Failures in OD moved the field away from the notion of failure as something to be feared to the idea that failure is something that can be celebrated for the useful insights that it may produce. Until the message that it is okay to fail was broadcast among OD practitioners, there was much less willingness in the field to engage in self-questioning and reflective practices that may call into question the consultant's mental models and intervention strategies. This book represents the potential for double loop learning that must be leveraged not just by the clients but also by the consultants themselves.
- Mirvis's work on M&A with Marks awakened organizations to the importance of compatibility (or lack thereof) between organizational cultures as a vitally significant determinant of success or failure in making deals. It is a perennial reminder

that due diligence is not merely a matter of business architectures and strategies but of attending to the underlying human variables that are much less tangible and much more complex.

- Mirvis's orchestration of learning journeys represents a creative response to the contemporary global epidemic of alienation in organizations. With the uncertainties of the global era and the competition, employees experience high levels of powerlessness, meaninglessness, cultural estrangement, social isolation, normlessness, and self-estrangement. Learning journeys are the perfect antidote to these states of alienated consciousness and represent a very lively intervention modality that embraces people in their wholeness and totality, allowing the entire system to be informed by the significance of the individual and for the individual to feel honored and affirmed in being contributed to by the whole system.

Notwithstanding these contributions, Mirvis agrees that his kind of work represents an anomaly to mainstream scholarship and practice and that there is plenty of "unfinished business" in the field of OD and change. For instance, the idea that assessment and change practices are both an art and a science is agreeable to many but the prevalence of pseudo-scientific assessment tools and standardized change management packages suggest that the field has yet to catch up to the level of organizational wisdom and scientific perspicacity represented by this integration of epistemologies. With a few notable exceptions, most graduate programs in organizational studies disproportionately inculcate the epistemology of a scientist among their students and do very little to help encourage the celebration of this work as both an art and a science.

While Mirvis's work carries with it a deep honoring of work/family integration and careers that represent a "path with a heart," a celebration of egalitarianism and power equalization within modern bureaucracies, and a radically humanistic vision of work, there are definite indications that the organizational zeitgeist may actually be evolving in precisely the opposite directions. Working people everywhere are treated as disposable assets and continuous job insecurity yields dependency, subservience, and serious work/family imbalance engendered by the fear of job loss.

In turn, Mirvis's work on CSR may be intellectually inspiring but evidence attests to strong corporate control of the world's food resources by a handful of conglomerates (including some that Mirvis has worked with and featured as icons of CSR), the displacement of indigenous people by corporations thirsting after natural resources on cooperatively owned land, and further threat of environmental degradation through fracking, global warming, and deforestation even as the global epidemic toward privatization of the commons leaves the average citizen ever more impoverished. And as Mirvis's writings on "best practices" in CSR stress laudatory conduct, such unflagging corporate optimism also carries with it the serious risk that CSR could be serving as the proverbial "opiate of the people" administered by people with high power in corporations to preserve and perpetuate the inequities of the status quo and the disenfranchisement of communities across the whole world.

Conclusion

There has been a longstanding tension in the organizational studies disciplines between the cynicism of critical theorists and the sometimes Pollyannaish perspectives of positive organization psychology (Davies 2016). The early Mirvis, through his revolutionary zeal, had been a trenchant champion of disaffection with the status-quo and much of his writing preserves a healthy level of skepticism including a deep awareness of the distortions caused by power structures. The positive psychology movement, on the other hand, seems to sweep power issues aside in calling for a focus primarily on the “good” side of the picture. Rather than seeing cynical realism and positive thinking as incompatible, the truly positive scholar will appreciate the idealism that fires the cynic and empathize with the sources of the cynic’s wariness in the deep witnessing and understanding of how modern institutions frequently partake in and create impunity to extreme abuses of power. And perhaps the cynic as well might cast aside “miserablism” (especially prominent in business schools today, as the late Mirvis (2014) writes) in favor of exploration and experimentation aimed at uplifting the human condition. This level of transcendental integration of these seemingly divergent and antithetical stances is what will bring both tendencies into a condition of mutually beneficial dialogue and maybe even collaboration. And it would be perfectly in keeping with Mirvis’s capacity to transcend polarities that has been one of the most distinguishing hallmarks of his boundaryless career.

References

- Bishop, M. (2016). *The good life: Unifying the philosophy and psychology of well-being*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bojanowska, A., & Zalewska, A. (2016). Lay understanding of happiness and the experience of well-being: Are some conceptions of happiness more beneficial than others? *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 17(2), 793–815.
- Burrell, G., & Morgan, G. (1979). *Sociological paradigms and organisational analysis* (Vol. 248). London: Heinemann.
- Carlson, M. (1996). *Performance*. London: Routledge.
- Conyers, M., & Wilson, D. (2015). *Positively smarter: Science and strategies for increasing happiness, achievement, and well-being*. New York: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Davies, W. (2016). *The happiness industry: How the government and big business sold us well-being*. New York: Verso.
- Denison, D., & Spreitzer, G. (1991). Organizational culture and organizational development: A competing values framework. In W. Pasmore & R. Woodman (Eds.), *Research in organizational change and development* (Vol. 5, pp. 1–21). Greenwich: JAI Press.
- Eichar, D. (2015). *The rise and fall of corporate social responsibility*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.
- Mirvis, P. H., Ayas, K., & Roth, G. L. (2001). Learning in performance: How a Dutch company transformed itself. *Reflections*, 2(4), 21–38.
- Moon, J. (2015). *Corporate social responsibility: A very short introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Waddock, S. (2015). *Intellectual shamans*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Further Reading

Select Publications by Mirvis on...

a. Organization Change

- Mirvis, P. H. (1988). Organization development: Part I – An evolutionary perspective. In R. W. Woodman & W. A. Pasmore (Eds.), *Research in organizational change and development* (Vol. 2, pp. 1–58). Greenwich: JAI Press.
- Mirvis, P. H. (2005). Large group interventions: Change as theater. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 41(1), 122–138.
- Mirvis, P. H. (2006). Revolutions in OD: The new and new, new things. In J. Gallos (Ed.), *Organization development: A Jossey-Bass reader*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mirvis, P. H. (2014). JABS at 50: Applied behavioral science and something more? *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 50(4), 1–31.
- Mirvis, P. H., & Berg, D. N. (Eds.). (1977). *Failures in organization development and change: Cases and essays for learning*. New York: Wiley Interscience.
- Mirvis, P. H., Ayas, K., & Roth, G. (2003). *To the desert and back: The story of one of the most dramatic business transformations on record*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

b. Mergers & Acquisitions

- Marks, M. L., & Mirvis P. H. (1998). *Joining forces: Making one plus one equal three in mergers, acquisitions, and alliances*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. 2nd ed., 2010.
- Marks, M. L., & Mirvis, P. H. (2001). Making mergers and acquisitions work: Strategic and psychological preparation. *Academy of Management Executive*, 15(2), 80–94.
- Mirvis, P. H. (2008). Can you buy CSR? *California Management Review*, 51(1), 109–116.
- Mirvis, P. H., & Marks, M. L. (1991). *Managing the merger*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall. (Republished by Beard Books, Frederick, 2003).
- Mirvis, P. H., & Sales, A. S. (1990). Feeling the elephant: Culture change following a corporate acquisition and buyback. In B. Schneider (Ed.), *Organizational climate and culture*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

c. Workforce and Workplace

- Kanter, D. L., & Mirvis, P. H. (1989). *The cynical Americans: Living and working in an age of discontent and disillusion*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mirvis, P. H. (Ed.). (1993). *Building the competitive workforce: Investing in human capital for corporate success*. Wiley: New York.
- Mirvis, P. H., & Hall, D. T. (1994). Psychological success and the boundaryless career. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 15, 365–380.
- Mirvis, P. H., & Macy, B. A. (1976). Human resource accounting: A measurement perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, 1, 74–83.
- Seashore, S. L., Lawler, E. E., Mirvis, P. H., & Cammann, C. (Eds.). (1983). *Assessing organizational change: A guide to methods, measures, and practices*. New York: Wiley.

d. Leadership Development & Consciousness Raising

- Mirvis, P. H. (1997). 'Soul work' in organizations. *Organization Science*, 8(2), 193–206.
- Mirvis, P. H. (2008). Executive development through consciousness raising experiences. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 7(2), 173–188.
- Mirvis, P. H., & Ayas, K. (2008). Enhancing the psycho-spiritual development of leaders: Lessons from the leadership journeys in Asia. In J. Gallos (Ed.) *Business leadership: A Jossey-Bass reader*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mirvis, P. H., & Gunning, W. L. (2006). Creating a community of leaders. *Organizational Dynamics*, 35(1), 69–82.

e. Role of Business in Society

- Googins, B., Mirvis, P. H., & Rochlin, S. (2007). *Beyond 'good company': Next generation corporate citizenship*. New York: Palgrave.
- Mirvis, P. H. (1994). Environmentalism in progressive businesses. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 7(4), 82–100.
- Mirvis, P. H. (2000). Transformation at Shell: Commerce and citizenship. *Business and Society Review*, 105(1), 63–84.
- Mirvis, P. H. (2012). Employee engagement and CSR: Transactional, relational, and developmental approaches. *California Management Review*, 54(4), 93–117.
- Mirvis, P. H., & Googins, B. (2006). Stages of corporate citizenship: A developmental framework. *California Management Review*, 48(2), 104–126.

f. Issues in Scholarship and Practice

- Mirvis, P. H. (1980). The art of assessing the quality of work life. In E. Lawler, D. Nadler, & C. Cammann (Eds.), *Organizational assessment* (pp. 471–489). New York: Wiley.
- Mirvis, P. H. (1994). Human development or depersonalization? The company as total community. In F. Heuberger & L. Nash (Eds.), *A fatal embrace? Assessing holistic trends in human resources programs*. New Brunswick: Transaction.
- Mirvis, P. H. (1996). Midlife as a consultant. In P. J. Frost & M. S. Taylor (Eds.), *Rhythms of academic life*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Mirvis, P. H. (2014). Mimicry, miserablism, and management education. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 23, 439–442.
- Mirvis, P. H., & Lawler, E. E. (2011). Rigor and relevance in organizational research: Experiences, reflections, and a look ahead. In E. E. Lawler, S. Mohrman, et al. (Eds.), *Doing research that is useful for theory and practice – 25 years later*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Mirvis, P. H., & Seashore, S. E. (1979). Being ethical in organizational research. *American Psychologist*, 34, 766–780.