

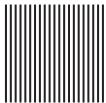
articles

The Elevation of Work: Pastoral Power and the New Age Work Ethic

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Abstract. *This paper seeks to establish the contours of the popular workplace spirituality discourse through analysis of academic and practitioner texts and accounts of organizational practice. We identify several themes, drawing attention to potential contradictions in the notions of meaning, measurement and community, which the discourse seeks to promote. In seeking to understand the means whereby it is embodied as a source of administrative power we draw on a range of historical and contemporary organizational examples, illustrating how pastoral power is reinforced through the construction of disciplinary technologies. We argue that the workplace spirituality discourse shares Weber's acceptance of the structural conditions of capitalism and seeks to resolve the dilemmas this creates for the individual through developing an inner sense of meaning and virtue. In this respect, it represents a revival of the Protestant ethic in a way that involves re-visioning the ambivalent relationship between self and organization. We conclude that the 'social ethic' has given way to a New Age work ethic, which relies on the management of individual metaphysics as a source of organizational, as well as personal, transformation.* **Key words.** culture; New Age management; pastoral power; Protestant ethic; workplace spirituality.



Introduction

Analysts of management have frequently drawn attention to the metaphorical use of religious language suggested to characterize its practice.

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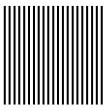


Some have described the level of belief involved in selling new management ideas to employees as 'religious fervor' (Bank, 1992) or 'messianic zeal' (Pettigrew, 1985). 'Mission' and 'vision' are terms suggested to be 'redolent with theological meaning' (Vinten, 2000: 5) yet they are widely used in business and management, and it has become commonplace to draw attention to the way in which the management 'guru' occupies a prophetic role. Direct selling organizations such as Tupperware and Mary Kay Cosmetics have been described as 'quasi-religious' (Bromley, 1998) and the business of direct marketing has invited parallels with evangelical performance through its reliance on techniques that would be familiar to the members of a Christian non-conformist church (Höpfl and Maddrell, 1996).

Additionally, some management development programmes make use of emotion to transform individual personality in a manner that mimics the religious conversion experience (Ackers and Preston, 1997). There is a growing market in religious-styled management development workshops and seminars claiming to enable spiritual self-development. By drawing on an ideology of self-fulfilment, self-discovery and self-development (Roberts, 1992), such courses suggest that individuals are able to influence their work organizations in dramatic, even magical, fashion (Heelas, 1992). These events claim to release managers from negative thoughts, fears or barriers that might impede the development of a successful organization. Educated white-collar workers, managers and consultants, drawn by their disillusion with the materialistic goals of commercial work organizations, are particularly attracted to the possibility of combining personal and corporate transformation (Heelas, 1991). These examples illustrate that, in terms of both practice and analysis, management has at the very least acquired some of the language and characteristics of religion, albeit in a secularized version.

More recently, however, spirituality and management have become conjoined in an association that is less metaphorical and more actual. Evidence of this shift can be seen in the increase in popular business and management literature during the 1990s that explicitly addressed the emerging theme of workplace spirituality. This literature promotes a view of the organization as a spiritual-social system composed of employees whose existential needs must be supported if the organization is to flourish. In explaining how this can be achieved, attention has focused, first, on exploring the meaning of work in relation to a higher purpose and, second, on encouraging a more holistic view of work organizations as communal centres, where actions can be seen as practically and morally interconnected with the physical and social environment.

In this paper we suggest that workplace spirituality represents a contemporary discourse through which the meaning of work is located within a wider moral and societal context. We argue that this discourse provides a means of elevating the meaning of work through construction of a potential transcendent purpose or moral virtue. However, workplace



spirituality is not neutral with respect to power relations. In order to understand the meaning of this discourse in the context of work organizations, we must first explore how it is realized and then consider the impact it has on employees and managers who affect and are affected by its practices. The paper begins by outlining the claims and the themes associated with the current discourse, proceeding to explore the way they affect our understandings of the purpose and meaning of work. We suggest that a more critical perspective can be brought to bear on the analysis of workplace spirituality through consideration of the influence of religion on the development of industrial and post-industrial work organizations. We further suggest that the technologies associated with the discourse can be understood in terms of the notion of 'pastoral power' (Foucault, 1981, 1982).

Spirit at Work in the 21st Century

In order to understand the importance of workplace spirituality, we first need to explore the cultural resonances of this discourse in society as a whole. Spirituality has emerged as a term where 'the thrust is towards a transcendent, but not necessarily supernatural, point of reference' that recognizes the strengths derived from the whole person, the interconnected nature of the human and the non-human environment, and the global nature of social and natural processes (Beckford, 1992: 18). The notion thus reflects a global consciousness that has stimulated the creation of a more fluid, dynamic understanding of religion that is more appropriate in a pluralistic society (King, 1996). Hence the spiritual search for meaning and understanding is a matter of choice for many people, who are increasingly exposed through cross-cultural interpenetration of ideas to multiple religious traditions. In addition, such changes have given rise to the emergence of the 'New Age movement' (an umbrella term that covers a wide variety of forms of religious and spiritual experimentation). This diffuse movement exists in dynamic tension with both established religion and science, attempting to combine the values of post-materialist society with an ideology of self-fulfilment and self-discovery by repackaging religion, psychology and therapy in a way that makes them particularly suited to the conditions of industrial and post-industrial society (Sutcliffe and Bowman, 2000). These societal changes thus enable what Foucault (1982) considers to be our two most important cultural preoccupations – with psychology and meaning – to be satisfied.

The emerging discourse of workplace spirituality can be located within this broader rubric of the New Age, having been introduced into organizations by 'New Age professionals' (Heelas, 1992) who claim that their beliefs can be practised in the world of business. The New Age has enabled the adoption of a 'pick and mix' approach to religion, incorporating diverse cross-cultural practices such as Sufi dancing, Taoist wisdom



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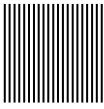
and Native American beliefs and adapting them to fit the context of the work organization. Spirituality thus provides a label for the introduction of the sacred into diverse secular (including organizational) contexts. Moreover, the ambiguous nature of the term allows it to be used flexibly in situations in which greater clarity and specific reference to religion might cause social awkwardness or conflict (King, 1996; Cash and Gray, 2000).

However, we would argue that a number of problems and potential contradictions emerge in relation to the workplace spirituality discourse and the way it is currently being constructed. Somewhat paradoxically, rather than enabling liberation from the constraints of work and modernity, workplace spirituality ensures that the search for meaning is harnessed to specific organizational purposes. Existential questions about the purpose of life and suffering are translated into technical questions of self and organizational management. As a result, this discourse suggests we can achieve fulfilment by means of work rather than in spite of it.

Defining Spirituality

Despite contemporary management interest in spirituality, there are widespread differences in the meaning and significance attributed to this term. Some writers define it broadly as any religious or ethical value that is concretized as an attitude or spirit from which one's actions flow (Nevard, 1991). Dehler and Welsh (1994: 19) describe it as 'a subconscious feeling that energizes individual action in relation to a specific task', whereas Fairholm (1996) suggests that it implies a relationship with something intangible beyond the self. The concept is defined more precisely by Ashmos and Duchon (2000), who suggest that spirituality has three main components: first, it involves the recognition that employees have an inner life related to their soul and accessed through practices such as meditation, self-reflection and prayer; second, it assumes that employees need to find work meaningful; and, third, it suggests that the organization provides the context or community in which spiritual expression can take place. The organization is portrayed as a communal centre, promoting mutual obligation and commitment based on trust (Mirvis, 1997).

Some writers have stressed that a clear distinction must be made between spirituality and religion. They argue that organized religion, characterized by formalized practices and institutionalized structures, lies beyond the legitimate boundaries of workplace intervention, whereas spirituality is a valid organizational concern (Mitroff and Denton, 1999). They also suggest that spirituality at work is not restricted to any particular religious tradition. It is therefore inclusive of those who are not religious but who are spiritual, as well as those who have a religious faith. This renders the need to refer to the transcendent obsolete, instead emphasizing the immanent nature of this engagement, based on recognition and realization of inner being.



Workplace Spirituality in Practice

Workplace spirituality is claimed by advocates to be a relatively new idea (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000) which has stimulated a broad range of alternative practices within the workplace. There are numerous recent examples of organizations that have sought to increase the extent of employees' spiritual awareness through the deliberate introduction of spiritual-cultural practices. Xerox sent a team of senior executives to a Native American desert retreat in New Mexico, and the World Bank in New York is involved in a project that aligns corporate values with spiritual aims (Overell, 2001). In the UK, a symbolic wake was organized by management to mark the corporate merger between two major drug companies (Chambliss, 2001), and, in both the UK and the United States, corporate or industrial chaplains provide workplace counselling to employees in many companies (Cash and Gray, 2000; Elkin, 1992). Meditation centres have been set up and religious study groups, or Bible meetings, are held in company time or on company premises.

Moreover, spiritual leadership in management is increasingly popular as an international conference theme, attracting academic audiences as well as consultants and trainers. In the year 2000 the Academy of Management launched a special interest group entitled Management, Spirituality and Religion; it currently has over 200 members. In the UK, the New Age community at Findhorn hosted a conference on Business and Life in 1997 and the first International Conference on Organizational Spirituality was held at the University of Surrey in 2002. A conference on Business and Consciousness is held in New Mexico each year, and, in the southern hemisphere, the Spirituality, Leadership and Management Network hosts an annual meeting of academics and practitioners. Within business schools a number of academics have incorporated elements of spiritual teaching into the curriculum; they claim to be driven by their own spiritual journey or transformation to deliver highly experiential learning that involves students in meditation, confession, storytelling, dance, music and prayer (Delbecq, 2000; Neal, 1997). This interest has gradually spread from the margins to the mainstream. Hence the prestigious International Program in Practicing Management begins with a module hosted by the Lancaster University School of Management where participants discuss ethics and spirituality in order to develop a reflective mindset (Mintzberg and Gosling, 2002).

Several examples of spiritual-ethical businesses in the United States and Europe have been used to illustrate the spiritual work organization. It is claimed these organizations enable employees to move beyond the economic imperative for organizing, to see work as a morally superior and worthwhile enterprise. The examples include Southwest Airlines, whose CEO claims that the company's success is founded on humour, love and soul (Petzinger, 1995; Milliman et al., 1999), and Servicemaster, whose fourth corporate objective is to 'honor God in all that we do'



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(Overell, 2001). The multinational healthcare firm Medtronic is described as focusing on the spiritual side of its work and the deeper meaning of its mission to save lives (Chatterjee, 1998). Van den Bergh Foods, a Dutch subsidiary of Unilever, is held to be exemplary of spiritual business, having taken groups of managers on retreats and turned the organization into a community where the 'whole' person is welcomed (Bolman and Deal, 2001). Finally, senior managers in so-called 'socially responsible' companies such as Ben and Jerry's and The Body Shop have spoken of the importance of workplace spirituality in a way that suggests it is complementary to their commercially successful ethical business principles.

Spirituality as an Organizational Resource

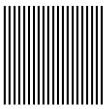
Amongst academics and practitioners, the project of exploring the soul at work has been pursued by those who have defined their role as advocates and facilitators of the spiritual growth of organizations. They are driven by the belief that:

Unless organizations become more spiritual, the fragmentation and ambivalence felt by individuals cannot be repaired. Unless organizations become more spiritual, they cannot reap the benefits of the full and deep engagement of their employees, their so-called most valuable resource. In the plainest terms, unless organizations not only acknowledge the soul but also attempt to deal directly with spiritual concerns in the workplace, they will not meet the challenges of the next millennium. (Mitroff and Denton, 1999: 7)

The main principle that guides such claims is a commitment to fostering workplace spirituality to enhance employee attitudes towards work, with the intention that this will improve motivation and have a positive impact on organizational performance. In a frequently cited study, Mitroff and Denton (1999) suggest that corporate profitability must be founded on ethical and spiritual principles and that businesses should serve the moral and spiritual needs of employees and communities. Others caution that:

Too many workplaces are almost devoid of meaning and purpose. They are ruled by technology, efficiency, and the bottom line, with little regard for what employees need in order to experience personal fulfillment and success. Over time, this takes a heavy toll on motivation, loyalty and performance. It is a road to crisis and decay – unless we find ways to reinfuse the workplace with passion, zest, and spirit. (Bolman and Deal, 2001: 6)

These books provide a template for the 'preservation of the soul in corporate America' (Whyte, 1994) by advocating spirituality as the basis for workplace learning and leadership (Renesch, 1992; Conger, 1994; Vaill, 1996). Spirit at work is suggested to be a reaction to negative influences on our organizational lives. Some have argued that factors such as downsizing (Laabs, 1995) and the rigid compartmentalization of



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work and non-work roles (Cavanagh, 1999) have stimulated a search for alternative, less alienating, organizational practices. Others blame consumer culture and workaholism and call for a spiritual revolution (Fox, 1994). Finally, some say workplace spirituality represents a pragmatic solution to problems caused by a careerist orientation (LaBier, 1986), providing a context in which 'busy professionals' are able to practise their faith (Cash and Gray, 2000).

Spirituality as a Source of Meaning

A further claim made by some workplace spirituality writers is that work and business represent a secularized vocation. Employees are encouraged to find meaning in their work whatever its structural conditions. Hence, Fox (1994) proposes that, once one discovers a spiritual centre from which to work, no work is alienating, no work is just a job. Even sweeping floors can be regarded as a sacred act, since all work contains drudgery and the essential issue is whether it can hold meaning or not. Other workplace spirituality writers suggest that capitalist business can be seen as a calling. In his defence of capitalism as a source of vocation, Novak (1996) claims that the language of business and economic textbooks has silenced the moral and sacred purpose of business organizations. He advocates that morally sensitive businesses should begin to take responsibility for their role as locales of human economic creativity and that business should be seen as a fundamentally sacred enterprise.

A tension arises, however, from this claim. By suggesting that salvation can come only from hard work and commitment to the task to which the individual is called, advocates of workplace spirituality establish all paid employment as having an inherent moral virtue. In so doing, they in effect distance themselves from any possible critique of the effort–reward bargain as an instrumentally driven exchange relying on the exploitation of labour. Instead, work is redefined as a calling, and the fundamental conflicts of interest that characterize production are obscured. Individuals are portrayed as wholly free agents responsible for determining their own spiritual development and the work organization is cast as a source of spiritual opportunity.

Measurement and Management of Spirituality

Studies that attempt to measure and model workplace spirituality argue that the spiritually satisfied worker is more efficient and effective (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Milliman et al., 1999, 2001; Mitroff and Denton, 1999). Certain writers have proposed that the level of spiritual awareness in the workplace can be quantitatively measured and positively correlated to behavioural measures of employee motivation (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Milliman et al., 2001). Some argue that 'companies that engage not just the minds, but also the hearts and emotions of their employees, will be more profitable' (Milliman et al.,



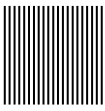
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1999: 230). Mitroff and Denton (1999) propose a model of the spiritual organization, claiming that organizations that identify with spirituality tend to have employees who perceive their companies as more profitable and who are more able to be creative and intelligent at work.

A further contradiction arises in relation to the empirical study of workplace spirituality. Much attention has focused on the way this phenomenon can be rigorously measured, and in particular how it can be translated into 'testable hypotheses' and 'well framed research questions' in order to ensure its acceptance as an area of legitimate interest within the management discipline (AOM/MSR, 2001). This positivistic logic reflects dominant methodologies within management research that attempt to constitute workplace spirituality as an object of study. Ironically, however, interest in workplace spirituality is driven by the limitations of positivistic thought and by the need to develop alternative visions that challenge the 'dehumanized representations' (Boje et al., 1996: 8) constructed through objectivist social science. Workplace spirituality thus implies a challenge to the Enlightenment view of the individual as a 'self without God', driven by reason and self-determining (Harvey, 1990). By constructing workplace spirituality as an important organizational phenomenon, the contemporary experience of work is mystified and its meaning is suggested to be elusive. Paradoxically, the subsequent representation of workplace spirituality as something to be managed, measured and modelled contributes towards the subsequent demystification of spirituality and the self.

The theme of measurement is also manifest in attempts to correlate the incidence of individual and collective spirituality with established behavioural factors, to develop strategies that enable it to be managed. Some writers caution against the use of spirituality as a managerial tool to improve organizational efficiency (Nevard, 1991; Skelley, 1996), and yet the idea is evidently being 'sold' through the publication of articles providing templates for managers to follow. In this way, the discourse strives to reconcile individual and organizational interests. It is suggested that, while seeking to satisfy the existential needs of the individual, the needs of the organization for profitability and growth can also be met. The discourse thus reinforces the idea of work as providing a path to enlightenment through the notion of self-actualization (Maslow, 1971). It portrays personal growth as the primary means whereby the 'iron cage' of the alienating work environment can be made enlightening (Heelas, 1991). This project, however, relies on the provision of a tightly circumscribed route to psychic discovery based on the realization of immanence or the recognition and realization of the self and the soul within. By suggesting that workplace spirituality cannot be deliberately influenced but can only be released, the discourse promotes a depoliticized view of the organization as simply providing the context in which spiritual growth can be achieved.



Organization as Community

Finally, an important criticism stems from the underlying assumption in the workplace spirituality literature that, because of the escalating proportion of time and energy spent at work, the workplace has become our most significant community. Advocates of workplace spirituality suggest that work provides a replacement for other forms of collective participation, such as the church or extended family, which formerly provided individuals with a source of stable identity (Conger, 1994; Renesch, 1992). Such claims, however, are far from neutral. They reflect an ideology of work that relies on colonization of the self. By emphasizing work as having the potential to fulfil all human needs, including physical, mental, emotional and existential needs, workplace spirituality de-emphasizes the significance of non-work domains as contexts in which spiritual growth can be located. By situating the potential satisfaction of all human needs within the context of the work organization, the maintenance of a work–life balance ceases to be a problem.

It is impossible to comprehend the significance of this discourse without also considering the potential effects on organizational power relations arising from the emergence of this latest affective form of management. In particular, the theme of measurement and management leads us to suggest that workplace spirituality represents an attempt to mobilize the individual to serve the interests of the organization through the construction of a regime of truth based on ideas about potential, growth, purpose, meaning and community. In the following section we outline aspects of Weberian and Foucauldian frameworks that enable understanding of the means by which this source of administrative power is embodied through strategies and technologies found within the discourse.

Discipline and Spirit

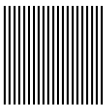
It has been argued that Foucault's studies of the disciplinary society complement Weber's formal analysis of the modern bureaucratic state despite certain key differences between the two theorists in terms of their conceptions of power (Clegg, 1994). Whereas Weber set out the formal analytic features of the legal–rational bureaucracy, Foucault complements this perspective by exploring the 'physiology' of bureaucracy and power through analysis of corporeal, attitudinal and behavioural disciplinary techniques (O'Neill, 1986). Most importantly, the work of both theorists converges around one central issue, the techniques through which individuals are subjected – and subject themselves – to rational discipline. Finally, both Weber and Foucault acknowledged religion and spirituality as being central to understanding the structures and disciplinary procedures of modern life and work (Foucault, 1981, 1982; Weber, 1930).



The model dominating our understanding of the influence of religion on work and organization is founded on the notion of the Protestant ethic. Weber's (1930) central thesis was that the values of Protestantism had a significant impact on the development of the capitalist mode of production and, in particular, on the distinctive industrial type found in Western Europe in the 19th century. The Protestant ethic showed how cultural phenomena, as well as economic factors, circumscribe social action. Weber's analysis was thus complementary to Marxist historical materialism¹ in that it demonstrated the potential of idealism in analysing the social development of the spirit of capitalism (Zeitlin, 1968). Weber argued that Calvinist values in particular enabled the development of 'sober, bourgeois capitalism' in Western Europe by shaping individual orientations towards the organization of production in a way that ensured the development of 'rational labour in a calling' (Weber, 1930: 24). By translating the concept of religious vocation or calling into a secular context, work was portrayed as a means of gaining salvation and workers were expected to act selflessly for a greater good. According to this ideology, work and employment were defined not as irksome necessities but instead as positive actions for the glory of God and the preservation of the soul.

This belief provided a rationale for both the accumulation of capital and the discipline of early factory workers. As early as the 18th and 19th centuries, machine and wage discipline were perceived to be insufficient on their own as methods for ensuring continuity and maximization of production. By the early 20th century, religious ideologies were further connected to the managerial construction of subjective identity through the search for social integration and industrial harmony (Rose, 1990). Philanthropic employers such as Cadbury, Lever Brothers, Wedgwood and Rowntree sought to develop cohesive devices (Jeremy, 1991) which provided the ideological foundation for the development of a strong corporate culture (Rowlinson and Hassard, 1993). Protestant owner-managers sought to foster beliefs that were complementary to the 'psychic component of work-discipline' (Thompson, 1963). Thompson suggested that, through conversion or adherence to the religious philosophy of managerial choice, the employee could be transformed from 'pre-industrial labourer' into 'submissive industrial worker' (1963: 367–8). Thus, in addition to supplying ideological justification for the capitalist exploitation of labour, these religious belief systems helped to secure the commitment of employees, who were encouraged to believe that work was an act of virtue that would smooth the road to salvation.

From this perspective, it is claimed, religion generated and legitimated values and norms essential to the stability and economic development of modern social systems (Beckford, 1992). Employees were expected to display a commitment to work beyond individual economic self-interest and also to display restraint in the consumption of goods. However, the reality of organizational life during the latter half of the 20th century



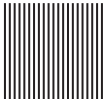
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meant that thrift and guilt became unfashionable; the principles of Protestantism therefore had to change, making way for replacement by a new social ethic (Whyte, 1956). Work was thereby stripped of a powerful source of meaning; it could no longer provide a vehicle for moral, social and religious self-improvement based on the value of hard work as a necessary source of suffering (Berger, 1964).

However, the secularization thesis that we have outlined above does not adequately account for the impact of the corporate culture movement, which revived managerial interest in exploring the sacred dimension of organizations and drew attention to the religious potential in management.² If religion is defined not in terms of the divine or supernatural but instead as a system of meaning constructed around historical and mythical narratives and reinforced by specific ritual practices, any organization that has explicitly articulated values intended to be shared by all members could be understood as religious. This would be to treat religion as a dimension of social experience (Demerath and Schmitt, 1998). Kunda, for example, in his study of a high-tech corporation, describes the strong culture as evident through the managerial expression of the need to 'educate people' into the 'right mindset', so that they 'have the religion without knowing how they got it' (1992: 5). Kunda portrays the organization as wanting not only 'your sweat' but also 'your soul' and describes the ideal employee as one who has internalized the organization's goals and values, to the extent that productive work is seen as combining the organization's interest in productivity with the employee's interest in growth and maturity. The culture thus promotes values such as 'doing what's right' in order to reinforce the corporation's depiction as an organic community making a social contribution. This encourages individuals to develop an emotional link to the company leading to 'commitment' or 'loyalty'. Kunda concludes that the combined imagery of 'family' and 'religion' characterizes the organization as a social entity.

The direct-selling organization Amway International provides a further example of an organization that has developed a quasi-religious culture (Bromley, 1998). In this case, the institutional contexts of work and family are brought together in a way that can be seen as totalizing (Biggart, 1989). Corporations such as Amway can be distinguished by the fact that personal membership and belief in the cause are more important criteria for membership than specific skills or prior experience. Religious practices such as prayer meetings and singing organizational hymns provide the ritual cultural acts that encourage employees to develop emotional attachments to their work involving the entire family. Eventually family members become customers and organizational members become family. Some Amway distributors suggest that this effectively resolves the tensions generated as a result of the differing demands of family and economy. By infusing the organization with these discourses, products and the act of selling become 'merely manifestations of a superior way of life' (Biggart, 1989: 99) and the organization is able to



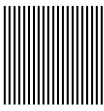
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claim the power to transform the lives of its members in physical, emotional and spiritual ways. Companies such as Amway thus draw attention to the way religion can be used within work organizations to reinforce managerial discourses, enabling the boundaries between work and non-work domains, in particular the family, to be mediated or even elided.

From these examples, we suggest that the discourse of workplace spirituality involves a reintegration of the segregated domains of work and family by providing a sense of purpose and meaning that relies on the assumption that work and family life can be combined. In so doing, the discourse potentially enables the non-work aspects of individual subjective identity to be more effectively encompassed by organizations. The success of such encompassing institutions depends in part on their ability to suppress alternative social systems, such as the family, that challenge it from the outside (Goffman, 1968). The workplace spirituality discourse develops this 'totalizing tendency' (Goffman, 1968) by providing an overarching system of meaning that serves to legitimate the social order through reference to a sacred power. It thereby restricts the possibility of retaining something of one's self from the organization, making the constitution of identity through 'recalcitrance' (Goffman, 1968) more difficult for the individual to achieve.

The techniques and disciplinary practices associated with the discourse of workplace spirituality can also be framed in terms of the notion of pastoral power (Foucault, 1981, 1982). Pastoral power can be distinguished from other forms of power by being both 'totalizing', concerned with cultivating the welfare of an entire population of citizens, and 'individualizing', a form of power that looks after each individual in particular, throughout his or her entire life (Foucault, 1982). Foucault traces the roots of pastoral power to the Christian metaphor of the shepherd, whose role is to gather together dispersed individuals as a flock and ensure their salvation by keeping watch over them. He highlights four aspects of importance in the evolution of Christian pastorship as a technology of power (1981). First, the shepherd assumes responsibility for every individual within the flock and for their detailed actions as well as their lives. Second, Christian pastorship diverges from Greek thought in assuming that the individual obedience to the will of the shepherd is a virtue and an end in itself that should not be influenced by reason. Third, Foucault suggests that Christian pastorship implies 'a peculiar type of knowledge' between the pastor and his flock, based on knowledge of the individuals' material needs, their public actions and their secret sins. From this final area of knowledge stems the fourth and possibly the most important feature of pastorship, which is that it can be distinguished only through its emphasis on individual salvation, achieved by getting to know an individual's innermost thoughts. Salvation is achieved through the use of Christian techniques of examination, confession, guidance and correction.



However, key to understanding Foucault's conceptualization of pastoral power is the recognition that, although the ecclesiastical institutions in which this technique was originally developed have declined in vitality, pastoral power as a 'matrix of individualization' has emerged as a central characteristic of the modern Western state. Thus, from the 18th century onwards, techniques of pastoral power 'suddenly spread out into the whole social body' as they 'found support in a multitude of institutions' (Foucault, 1982: 215). The institutions of the family, medicine, education and employment all developed modern forms of pastoral power reliant on a range of micro-technologies requiring intimate knowledge of the person. At this point in time, however, the objective of the new form of pastoral power shifted: 'it was no longer a question of leading people to their salvation in the next world, but rather ensuring it in this world' (Foucault, 1982: 215).

The influence of pastoral power can be seen within many Japanese work organizations, where religious and spiritual expression forms an integral part of working life (Rohlen, 1974). For example, Kondo's (1990) ethnographic study of a small confectionery factory involved her in a programme of company-sponsored spiritual education. Such spiritual education programmes were developed in Japan in response to the managerial perception that, owing to an over-emphasis on money, materialism and individuality, family, state and educational institutions were failing to produce morally and spiritually educated people suitable for employment. Kondo describes the ethics retreat she attended, where participants were encouraged to reflect on their individual responsibilities to the workgroup and to emphasize the importance of mundane activities such as cleaning, explained by the homily 'polish the floor and your heart will shine too'. Throughout, physical action was proposed as isomorphic with spiritual change, and course participants were encouraged to perform a series of punishing physical tasks, such as long-distance barefoot walks. The ethics retreat is designed to support the development of self-reliant people who are harnessed to the work of the organization.

Kondo demonstrates that these discourses of self-transformation 'are not innocent with respect to power relationships' (Kondo, 1987: 269). They are intended to reinforce a particular kind of worker-management relation 'in order to recapture an idealized past of benevolent paternalism and worker loyalty' (Kondo, 1990: 114). Through the technologies of examination, confession, guidance and correction, pastoral power is exercised in relation to the individual. Kondo suggests that these technologies are oriented towards achieving the disciplinary production of organizational subjects by ensuring compliance in task performance and attitudes to work. Although Kondo draws attention to some of the ways this power is resisted, especially after the retreat has ended, she notes that this rarely extends to any overt challenge of the programme.

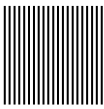


However, the primary significance of Kondo's study for analysis of the discourse of workplace spirituality stems from the potential application of Japanese cultural practices as managerial tools in the West, where Japan is widely regarded to be a model of economic success, corporate profitability and effective management (Pascale and Athos, 1982). The 'pick and mix' philosophy of New Age capitalism enables a more flexible approach to be taken towards the adoption and adaptation of many different religious systems, meaning that the 'inner quest' can become an 'avenue to commercial efficiency' (Heelas, 1992: 156). The perceived ability to establish and maintain total obedience through spiritual education founded on Eastern religious values and practices is likely to prove attractive to Western managers and management gurus. In an attempt to resolve the ambivalent relationship between self and organization in the West, it appears managers are turning to the instrumental use of technologies that appropriate spirituality in order to establish what they are encouraged to perceive as total obedience among a workforce.³ Under the guise of pluralism, workplace spirituality in this form becomes a source of pastoral power.

Following the logic of this discourse, it can be argued that workplace spirituality is potentially both individualizing and totalizing in its use of power. It is oriented towards salvation, and also linked with a production of truth that focuses ultimately on the individual (Foucault, 1982). Workplace spirituality relies on religious technologies of subjectivity, such as the retreat and the confessional, through which managers act upon the moral and existential values of the individual in an indirect yet powerful manner. It therefore represents an exercise of pastoral power (Foucault, 1982) that relies on self-revelation as a means of accessing the needs and attitudes of the subject. As such, it cannot be exercised 'without knowing the inside of people's minds, without exploring their souls, without making them reveal their innermost secrets' (Foucault, 1982: 214). This implies knowledge of the conscience as well as an ability to direct it. Workplace spirituality thus constitutes an aspect of a broader managerial ideology concerned with the management of subjectivity and the engineering of the human soul (Rose, 1990; Townley, 1994). In order to consider further the significance of the workplace spirituality discourse, we now return to some of the themes identified earlier in this paper and evaluate them in relation to the historical theoretical review we have presented in this section. This will enable us to interrogate the claims of the discourse more closely and to understand what it seeks to accomplish.

Resurrecting the Capitalist Spirit

First, advocates of workplace spirituality imply that work provides the primary context in which spiritual growth and the search for meaning are located. The discourse thus builds upon the current tendency towards



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erosion of the spatial and temporal boundaries between work and non-work domains within contemporary work organizations (Hochschild, 1997; Perlow, 1999).

Second, advocates of workplace spirituality suggest that the meaning of work in the 21st century will be transformed through the release of new forms of power and motivation, which will have an impact on organizational performance. By suggesting that spirituality cannot be managed but can only be released, the discourse promotes an apolitical view of the organization as a neutral context in which spiritual growth is simply located. The discourse focuses on the non-rational, informal and intuitive aspects of organization and suggests the need to adopt more holistic perspectives in the practice of management and the analysis of organizations. Yet, paradoxically, advocates of workplace spirituality also recommend that organizations should have a greater involvement in managing the self while simultaneously seeking to define the self and spirituality as beyond management. This tension implies that, in their efforts to achieve a definitive understanding of this notion, those who advocate workplace spirituality are obscuring rather than elucidating their intended subject.

Third, the 'problem' of meaning that workplace spirituality promises to resolve involves the partial embrace of religion as an organizational-cultural system. Through the discourse, the experience of work is mystified and its meaning is portrayed as elusive. The discourse implies that all forms of paid work can come to be seen as a calling or vocation, in which individuals are required to give their total and passionate commitment to employment in order to provide their lives with meaning. By focusing on the spiritual needs of the individual, the discourse assumes the existence of an inner or 'essential' self, whose potential must be released and enabled. By defining the employee as driven by inner spiritual needs at work, the organization is cast neutrally as the provider of opportunities for individual spiritual expression.

However, without the search for meaning there can be no lack of it. In other words, it can equally be argued that workplace spirituality is simply a product of a meaning-obsessed society, in which it is incorrectly assumed that there are always deep meanings to investigate. According to Foucault, the 'problem' of meaning in contemporary society is a cultural construction (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982). The search for ontological depth, which characterizes our current predicament, can therefore be seen as a problem that exists only in specific cultural circumstances. Workplace spirituality thus represents an attempt to solve the meaning of work by making work mystical, only then to de-mystify and resolve it.

Fourth, the clearest theme to emerge from our analysis is that, contrary to the claims of many advocates of workplace spirituality, this discourse is not new in its intent or in the practices associated with it. It is clear from this review that the relationship between organizations and spirituality has a long and complex history, which stems from the role of the



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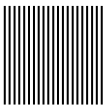
Spirituality, Management and Organization

Protestant ethic in informing the development of capitalism, organizational culture and power relations in both Eastern and Western economies. One of Weber's central conclusions was that the spirit of capitalism would come to dominate as an ideal, and religious beliefs would be replaced by the pursuit of wealth and possessions. Weber's proposed solution to the iron cage of production and consumption therefore relied on the development of a sense of vocation and existential dignity within an ethic of individual responsibility; the individual could thereby mediate the alienation of rational labour. The workplace spirituality discourse shares Weber's acceptance of the structural conditions of capitalism and seeks to resolve the dilemmas these create for the individual by developing an inner sense of meaning and virtue. In this respect, workplace spirituality represents a return to or even a revival of the Protestant ethic, not as a way of life defined in terms of thrift and guilt, but as a means of living with capitalism through conscientious consumption and love of the self.

The discourse thus mirrors broader societal changes in terms of current attitudes towards religion and belief, which have enabled greater exploration of the unconscious, the intuitive, the mystical, the symbolic, the emotional and the spiritual in organizations. It reflects the tendency to explore individual consciousness and the search for personal significance, in which the moral project is self-creation rather than self-knowledge. Hence, it relies and builds on the notions of potential and growth as more immediate means of reaching the divine state, rather than denial and suffering in order to achieve transcendence after death. This shift reflects a fundamental duality in gnostic thought between transcendence and immanence. Within transcendent philosophies, which form the basis for many Western religions, God is experienced as 'the other', existing outside ordinary experience. Eastern religions instead emphasize the realization of immanent spirituality, which is experienced through engagement with the god within and in which every moment and every context contain spiritual possibilities (Hardy, 1987). Immanence, rather than transcendence, dominates the workplace spirituality discourse, enabling the workplace to be cast as a context in which spiritual engagement can be achieved. Whereas the Protestant ethic embodied a transcendent philosophy and portrayed economic work as in the service of God, the current discourse embodies an immanent philosophy wherein work is seen as an activity through which personal growth can be achieved.

Conclusion

According to Whyte (1956), the Protestant ethic failed to resonate with the ideology of work that large bureaucratic organizations sought to promote and reward. During the early 20th century it was therefore gradually replaced by a new 'social ethic', which provided an alternative



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body of thought that made the pressures of society against the individual morally legitimate. The social ethic relies on three central propositions: the belief in the group as the source of creativity; the belief in belongingness as the ultimate need of the individual; and the belief in the application of science to achieve belongingness. Whyte argues that conformity to the norms of a bureaucratized, organized society conceiving of itself primarily in terms of image rather than action or content, results in an ethic in which the moral imperative to self-adaptation is the only constant. Although Whyte defines the new ethic primarily in terms of the social and the communal, he hints at the direction towards which it takes the manager in 'the practice of a tyranny more subtle and pervasive than that which he means to supplant. No one wants to see the old authoritarian return, but at least it could be said of him that what he wanted primarily of you was your sweat. The new man wants your soul' (Whyte, 1956: 365). The social ethic thus enables managers to exercise pastoral power over their subjects through disciplinary technologies that focus on the scientific governing of the soul using primarily psychological techniques.

At the turn of this century the discourse of workplace spirituality provides us with a new work ethic, one that attempts to resolve the ambivalent relationship between self and organization by drawing upon the Protestant ethic and re-visioning it according to New Age values. The New Age work ethic is different from the social ethic in that it reflects the current loss of faith in scientific progress as well as a disillusion with mainstream religion. It attempts to re-enchant disciplinary technologies through the management of individual metaphysics as a source of inner power and organizational success. This can be seen as an attempt to avoid the disenchantment of organizational life and to revive a spiritual, as well as a social, sense of purpose. Its emergence therefore forms part of a broader postmodern theological project – one that redefines the meaning of religious experience through proposing that spiritual and economic aims can be made commensurate. In this paper we have argued that, by exploring the societal and historical origins of workplace spirituality, it is possible to determine the present and future possibilities that this discourse represents through its claims. The most fundamental of these is that it is possible to change the world by changing oneself. The likely longevity of the discourse may thus be determined in part by the extent to which this complementary personal and organizational transformation is either achievable or achieved.

Notes

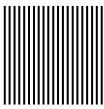
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- 1 Weber (1930) acknowledged that both he and Marx examined only one side of the causal chain each, and proposed that their methods could round each other out to provide a full structural-cultural understanding of the phenomenon of capitalist production.
- 2 Even the term 'cult-ure' is suggested by Demerath and Schmitt (1998) to be religiously impregnated and encoded.
- 3 Herzberg (1984), for example, suggests that adherents of Eastern religions will be easier to manage and more likely to be committed to organizational goals because they place less importance on the self and more on the group ego.

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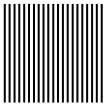
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