Different Perspectives of Spiritual capital in Business

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Masters of Commerce Business and Society
Huanga Maori Masters Students
Spiritual capital in Business, society and organisation
Meanings of religiousness and spirituality
(Zinnbauer, Pargament, Scott, 1999)

- Spirituality “a subjective experience of the sacred” (Vaughan, 1991)
- Pargament (1997) “a search for the sacred”
- Zinnbauer et al (1999): contrasts between religion and spirituality (ref p899)
Consumption *à la carte* plays cultural content off against each other e.g., neo-paganism, commodified witchcraft etc ...(class examples)

Eclectic and kleptomaniac way of selecting elements of culture(s), religions that “speak to the heart”

Eclectic private symbolism...new religious or spiritual synthesis are continually created via individual manipulation of existing symbolic systems...
Spirit-centered Organizations

- Spirituality a source of ‘quality’ for organization i.e. a quality organization can infuse individuals with ‘purpose’ and enthusiasm rather than exploiting and manipulating them.
- Relevance? Societal change & corporations are becoming knowledge/learning organizations
- New phenomena:
  - values-based leadership
  - social & ethical accounting
  - corporate social responsibility
  - ethical investment
- Companies that integrate performance & community responsibility will thrive - “walk the talk”
Danger of Misuse

- Treat as yet another “tool” to further dominant objective & measurable goals
- New “fad”
- Ethics used to temper opportunism & distrust but does not challenge underlying economic logic, i.e. only introduces ethics into the web of instrumental rationality
- Should not manipulate spirituality - it is too critical and of the essence of the human condition, i.e. should not use it as a ‘management tool’ or as ‘to develop corporate reputation or as a last resort. It is not a business opportunity.
Management & Leadership:

- “...the way we manage depends on the way we are. Spirituality is not something that we can just tack onto management.” (Lozano & Ribera)

- What type of management results from placing spirituality at the core of the human condition?

- Opportunity to develop a more precise, richer conception of management - maybe a hybrid leader-manage

- Cult of leadership, fostered by spirituality, has an ambiguous record. It is rooted in a long history of aristocratic, hierarchic and authoritarian tradition. Warning - beware of possible power & control agenda’s.

- Plato’s Academia ‘Philosopher King’ - physical, mental & spiritual training needed to achieve ‘enlightenment’ as a good leader.
Spiritually-based Leadership

- **Humanistic, democratic, sustainable frame of reference** for behaviour of leader-managers & their organisations:

- **Nishkamakarma** - perform deeds without attachment to fruitage (i.e. payoffs) & Holy indifference (Catholic) - detached involvement where work becomes selfless service

- “...follow our inner voice, our conscience, and do to the best of our ability what we find to be important”

- **Sensitivity to needs and value-based leadership/ corporate responsibility/ respect for stakeholders**

- **Motivated by spiritual progress** rather than business ‘success’

- **Servant leadership** - trust & goodwill “serve by leading” & “lead by serving”.

Spiritually-based Leadership

- **Self-realization** of quintessence of one’s being
- **Selfless leaders** are stable, strong, trustworthy, sensitive to aspirations of various stakeholders, have clear vision of what is best for organization as a whole
- **Non-violence in thought and deed**, i.e. perform their duties in peace with deep awareness of their connectivity to all living creatures and to the universe. E.g. Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela
- “**svarat samrat bhavati**”- one who can rule or govern oneself can also lead others. Indian civilisation founded upon groundwork of these ‘king-sages’.
- **Principles of Spirit-centered or Rajarshi leadership** include: capability of being haunted by deep existential questions; humility to learn from those not in powerful positions; ego-stripping; rigorous practice of holistic disciplines by mentors; resumption of secular responsibilities after gaining sacred wisdom.
Spiritual capital
Spiritual capital: Is it relevant to business and culture?

- Capital, capital?
- What kinds of tensions exist in the term “spiritual capital”?
- Consumption “a ritual process whose primary function is to make sense of the inchoate flux of events” (Douglas and Isherwood in Lofton, 2003, see slide 10)

Consumption of “sensations” linked to postmodern religions (Possamai, 2003)
- Argues alternative spiritualities are now an intrinsic part of what Jameson (1991) calls the “cultural logic of late capitalism”
- Strong detachment from systematised beliefs and practices to extreme forms of individualisation
Spiritual Capital

- No clear definition - elastic and applicable to all religions & non-religious activities
- Hard to divorce concept from religiosity
- Term originally used by Romanticist economist Adam Müller in context of economic development
- Research links to Becker’s Human Capital
- Links to Iannaccone’s Religious capital model
- Marriage of ‘spirituality’ and notion of intangible resource accumulation (capital)
“Taking Spirituality Seriously” – Zsolnai

- Spirituality – a new ‘barely tapped’ frontier for management:
  - In practice in organisations it can be:
    - Transformative – more inclusive, holistic, and peaceful activity system
    - Serve greater good of nature, society & future generations
  - Research is required to:
    - Integrate ‘spiritual experiences’ into management profession

- Unstable “body-life-mind” triad = faulty framework for ‘ways of being’ (ontology)

- Economic growth etc., must past ‘test of spirituality’ – not the other way round

- “Spirituality has to be the remedy for the growing malignancy in our material affairs”
Spirituality dialogue speaks of:

- “Mysticism as a supra-rational emotion, which brings the human mind, through an immediate intuitive feeling, into contact with élán vital (the creative force of life)”

- Passive spiritual openness recommended

- Spiritual attitude of self-transcendence links with a social claim to justice and care”

- Plato saw spirituality is an intellectual and emotional search for inner enlightenment

- Techniques to tune the Self to the Transcendental, e.g. meditation, prayer, divination, listening to inner voice etc.
Oprah Winfrey
(www.Google images.com, downloaded 30.04.07)
“Every product of Winfrey’s empire combines spiritual counsel with practical encouragement, inner awakening with capital pragmatism” (p599)

Episodes and articles serve as paradigmatic profiles in the spiritual practice of capitalism. Oprah famous for benevolent peddling of dreams and goods....practice of generosity that resonates. there is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving...and so forth
Practicing Oprah; or, the Prescriptive compulsion of a Spiritual capitalism, (Lofton, 2006, Journal of Popular culture, Vol. 39, No. 4)

- E.g “Princess for a Day” (what goodies did this include??)
- Everything conducted with “giddy” ritual solemnity...princess crowned, centre stage, throne etc...
- Ostensibly diverse groups, unendingly kind, deserving, financially inadequate
- Mini-saints deserving of some divine intervention.. an *Oprah* break complete with luxury hotels, indulgent respite, spiritual salvation
- Let the unveilings begin: constant stream of celebrity and product endorsements...
Proferring practice... it is imperative to do something...stories of triumph often over adversity make you wonder why you haven’t

Precise advocacies, How to manuals

Buying spirit: consumption “a ritual process whose primary function is to make sense of the inchoate flux of events” (Douglas and Isherwood)
Practicing Oprah; or, the Prescriptive compulsion of a Spiritual capitalism, (Lofton, 2006, Journal of Popular culture, Vol. 39, No. 4)

- **Writing spirit**: the practice of journaling “discover what you love and then find a way to offer it to others in the form of service, working hard and also allowing the energy of the universe to lead you”

- **Reading spirit**: Book club: “books that made a difference”

- Muslim women: Winfrey’s program emphasized the universality of women’s issues regardless of religious affiliation”
Modern Muslim women” is a religious believer who does not allow religion to interfere with her love of country and/or consumption...p 616

Lofton argues the underlying message is that “the difference between a modern Muslim women and a Muslim lacking modernity is that modern Muslims do not do anything that would disrupt the cult of capitalism”

Oprah is often described as the “high priestess of late capitalism”

Lofton suggests Oprah has a homogenised moral universe and may be constructing a whole new aesthetic prison

Boje argues that “one person’s spirituality is another’s iron cage”
OPRAH WINfrey is CEO of a multi-billion dollar global multi-media organisation, HARPO PRODUCTIONS and has a personal net worth estimated at US$1 billion dollars.

OPRAH WINfrey openly advocates spiritual pluralism.
Concluding reflections of spiritual capital in business and society

Class discussion