

Good for business: An integral theory perspective on spirituality in organisations

Mark Edwards

Graduate School of Management, University of Western Australia
Centre for Integral Leadership

INTRODUCTION

The recent interest in the place of spirituality in the work life of individuals and in the business life of organisations has a very pragmatic basis. To put it simply, it's good for business. Good, not only in public relations and corporate image terms, but also in terms of the substantive need for organisations to develop stronger connections to communities, a greater awareness of social and environmental responsibilities and a more spirited and valued workplace. As Warren Bennis says (Mitroff & Denton, 1999, p. xii):

Individuals and organisations that see themselves as "more spiritual" do better. They are more productive, creative and adaptive. The people in these organisations are more energised and productive because their work isn't solely about stock options and vacations and coffee breaks. Spiritual organisations are animated by meaning, by wholeness, and by seeing their work connected to events and people beyond themselves.

While it is widely recognised that common health problems among workers such as depression and chronic pain can impact on organisations in substantial ways, it is not so often acknowledged that issues such as meaning, purpose and spirituality in work also have a part to play in the life of every organisation (Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2004). One of the greatest tragedies of contemporary life is the "dispirited worker" and one of the most important resources that any organisation can possess is a worker with spirit. The issue of spirit and the spiritual is fundamental to any discussion of meaningful work in contemporary life. Successful organisations and leaders of the future will be spiritual in the sense that they will create and support meaningful and rewarding workplaces that have strong connections with local communities and environments while retaining a "big picture" vision of their organisational goals. This also means that the issues of cultural diversity, personal values and communal concerns will be important players in the development of any progressive organisation (Moxley, 2000). The growing requirement for responsible corporations and leaders to address the multiple bottom lines of economic, social, environmental and governance requirements opens up organisations to a whole new world of opportunities and responsibilities. That organisations will grapple with these demands in the context of workplace spirituality will be one of the defining features of emerging organisational life (Murrell, 1999).

Spirituality is a powerful motivating force in people's personal and public lives. It is strongly connected to people's moral development and ethical behaviour, to their sense of meaning and purpose and to their need for rewarding experiences and relationships (Maslow, 1971). All of these feed directly into how people feel and function in the workplace and ultimately into how organisations themselves operate and behave. In their audit of the place of spirituality in corporate America, in which they interviewed and surveyed 1,738 corporate managers, Mitroff and Denton (1999) found that organisations that have a stronger sense of spirituality have employees who are "less fearful of their organisation", exercise stronger values and ethical beliefs in their workplace, see their work as more rewarding and can more easily show "creativity and intelligence" at work. While we all acknowledge the crucial importance of these qualities in a successful organisation, their strong connection with spirituality is not often recognised. Mitroff and Denton (1999, p. xiv) go so far as to say that:

Today's organizations are impoverished spiritually and ... many of their most important problems are due to this impoverishment. In other words, today's organizations are suffering from a deep spiritual emptiness.

We don't have to look too far to see the organisational and community wreckage that occurs when morals,

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Mark Edwards, Graduate School of Management, University of Western Australia. email: mgedwards@graduate.uwa.edu.au

ethical principles and behavioural codes are ignored. These codes and moral sensitivities are underpinned and generated by spiritual realities of many forms and cultural manifestations. These include not only the mainstream spiritualities associated with Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Hindu and indigenous religions but also humanistic, secular, new age and personal systems of belief and meaning-making. The ethical and moral basis that supports all commercial activity is deeply connected to the spirituality and meaning systems that all people possess in both their individual and collective forms. That connection runs both ways. Belief systems and moralities inform and fortify the working life while, at the same time, the workplace provides a place for the application and living out of the spiritual sources of identity.

Whether they know it or not organisations have a crucial role to play in the whole question of personal and communal spirituality. Many individuals make their biggest contribution to society through their workplace. As Jay Conger of the Harvard Business School observes (1994, p.1), "For many of us the workplace has become our primary source of community". As social capital and community involvement diminish across much of the western world, the importance of the workplace as a source for personal meaning and community values is growing. It is often through their work that people today find ultimate purpose or, at least, the focus of their goals and values in life. And in many ways organisations have encouraged this shift to see the workplace as a source of meaning. The workplace is now one of the major educational environments in contemporary life (Porth, McCall & Bausch, 1999). Perhaps the most significant change in the philosophy of business in recent times has been the move from the drive to increase profits alone to the inclusion of the drive to develop employees - a drive for "self-development, within the confines of the corporate work unit" (Fairholm, 1997, p. 3). For many the workplace is now the main avenue for personal advancement as well as the "primary source of community" (Conger, 1994). Growth, meaning, development and purpose in life are not separate from spirituality and, whether it is openly recognised or not, the workplace will become ever more pivotal as a venue for the expression of the spiritual in contemporary life.

SPIRITUALITY AS INCLUDING THE WHOLE PERSON

In its broadest sense, spirituality is about the connections between the whole person and the whole community. Similarly, organisations also want the undivided involvement of the whole person to be present and fully engaged in their work. One of the managers interviewed by Mitroff and Denton (1999, p.4) makes the very relevant point that:

Organisations are constantly wanting and demanding more and more of us all of the time. But they can't have it both ways. They can't have more of us without getting and nourishing the whole person. Organizations must give back and contribute as much to the whole person as they want in return.

Organisations understandably want their employees and their leaders to be enthusiastic and spirited contributors to the success of the organisation. But is the real source of this enthusiasm, willingness, spirit and inspiration really acknowledged? The very words used to describe such qualities say something about their true source. For example, "enthusiasm" literally means "god within". The word "spirit" comes from the Latin *spiritus* meaning the breath of god. "Charisma" comes from a Greek word meaning divine gift and "willing" comes from the old English *willa* meaning well-being. To inspire someone means to breathe new life into them as God did with Adam in the first chapter of Genesis. All these terms, which are in common use in the business world, have a spiritual source. As Mitroff and Denton (1999, p.6) note:

One the one hand [the corporate world] declares spiritual issues strictly out of bounds, then on the other it tries sneaking them in through the back door and drawing heavily on them with calls for the unbridled energy and enthusiasm of its workers.

If spirituality in the workplace needs to be recognised as a front door issue we must first grapple with the complex task of understanding what the term might actually mean and with how we might discuss spirituality in ways that are relevant and appropriate to the work that organisations and workers perform. The discovery of meaning is central to this issue. As Cacioppe puts it (2000a, p. 49), "Discovering the meaning of one's work is a central part of spirituality". In our own meaningful treatment of these issues we need a vision that brings together these great worlds of spirituality and organisational life. Ken Wilber's Integral theory provides such a framework. Integral theory is a comprehensive approach to social change that is ideally suited to investigating complex organisational environments. In the following Integral theory will be applied to build a way of connecting the spiritual potential of individuals and organisations and the work that they perform within the

wider social context. As a result a broader and more community-oriented approach to the “spirituality” of work will be proposed. Some suggestions for how the model can be applied in areas such as leadership development, diversity issues and community involvement will also be presented.

AN OUTLINE OF INTEGRAL THEORY

Integral theory is an over-arching theory of development and evolution that covers the physical, biological and social worlds. Ken Wilber (1999; 2000) has been the driving force behind the growth of Integral theory and the following draws on his work as well as my own adaptations of his ground-breaking approach to human development and spirituality. The theory attempts to integrate the central philosophies, scientific theories and cultural worldviews as they appear across all eras, societies and places - hence the name Integral theory. These disparate worldviews and practices are brought together in what Wilber calls the AQAL model. AQAL is an acronym for All Quadrant, All Level, All Lines, and I add All Dynamics. Let’s start with the levels.

The first fact that we know about the universe is that it develops. All physical, biological and human systems change and often that change occurs in dramatic and qualitatively new steps or levels. The developmental levels covered in the lifespan of the human person are, in many ways, the ultimate example of the developmental processes that animate our world. There are a great many models of human development and they all share one thing in common – people mature through a series of qualitatively different levels or stages. These levels of developmental life mark out new capacities and emergent qualities through life. The set of basic levels can be regarded as a spectrum of development through which all people grow. Of course there are cultural variations in the way these levels are expressed but this cultural variation is grounded on the basic levels of development. The number of levels that a model includes is quite arbitrary. However, the minimum will include a formative level of development, an average or normative level and a higher potential or advanced level. In this presentation of Integral Theory I will use around eight levels to describe the development of organisations and individuals.

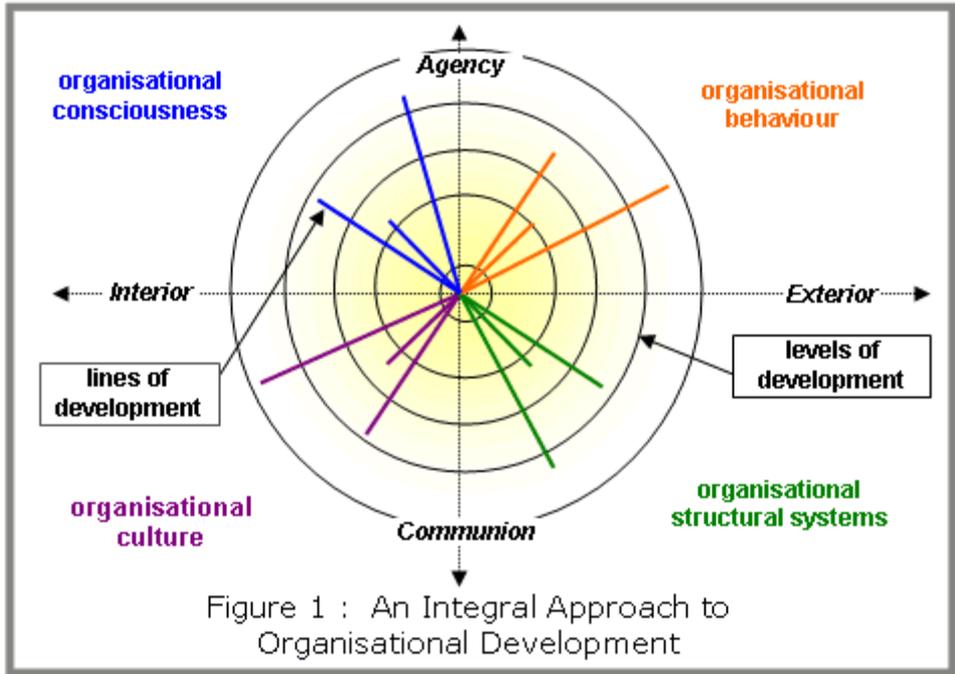
Now, let’s turn to the lines of development. All development is complex and multi-dimensional. Hence, there are models that deal with ego development, ethics and morals, interpersonal development, learning processes, stages of faith and knowledge development. Each of these facets of life can be represented as developing through the maturational levels of development. They are what Integral Theory calls developmental lines.

The quadrants are the domains or worlds within which development occurs. One of Wilber’s great insights was to see that all the maturational levels and the various lines can be categorised according to two basic dimensions of development. These are the interior-exterior dimension and the individual/agency-communal dimension. The crossing of these dimensions gives us the Four Quadrants of interior-agency or consciousness, exterior agency or behaviour, interior-communal or culture and exterior-communal or social. These are four domains or quadrants in which the development of every social entity is played out.

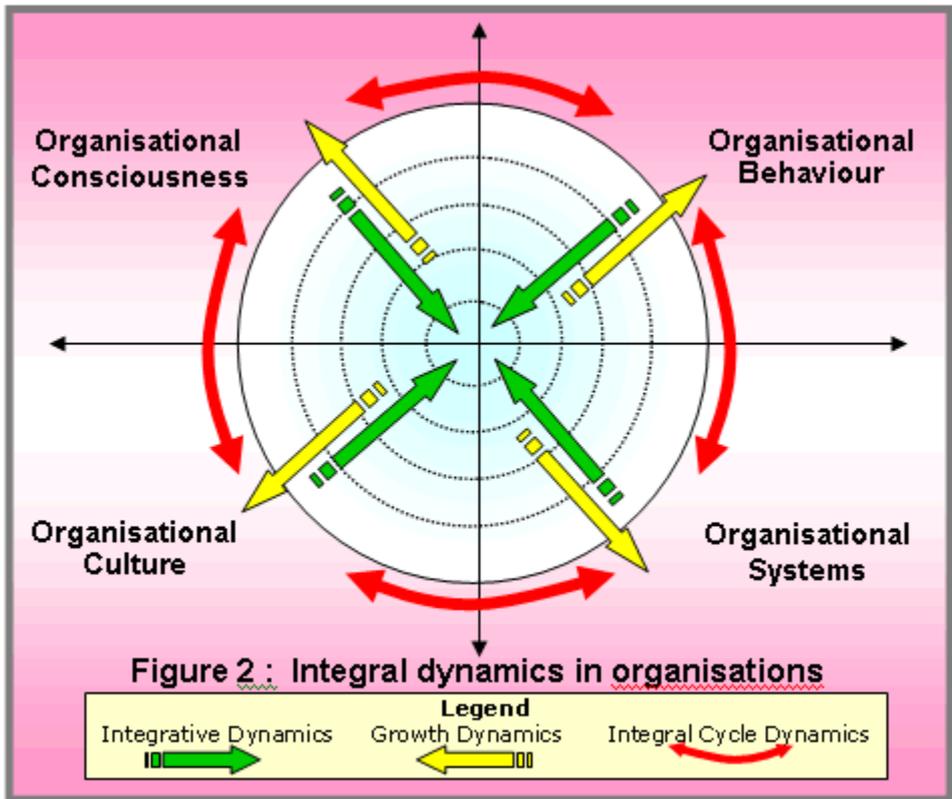
Mitroff and Denton say of Wilber’s quadrant model (1999, p27):

It is Wilber’s particular genius to have first recognised each of these four orientations with regard to spirituality, and then analysed how a robust approach to spirituality demands the integration of all four approaches. In other words, not only is each of the four orientations incomplete without the others, but also, and more importantly, each depends on the others for its basic existence and sustenance.

The Integral Theory model of quadrants, levels and lines is shown in Figure 1.

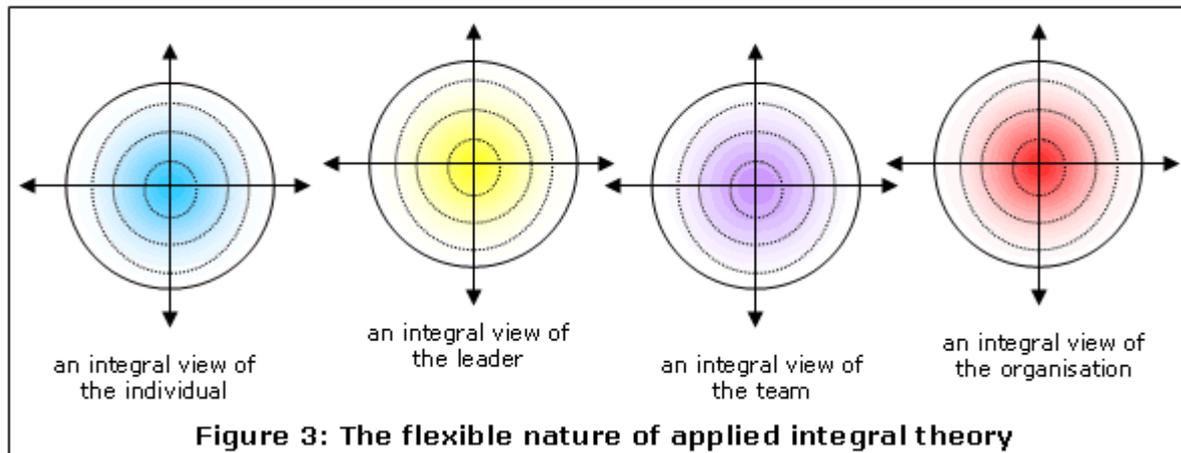


Quadrants, levels and lines are energised by the dynamics of growth and integration and by what I call the Integral Cycle. The Integral Cycle is the thing that keeps all these elements hanging together in a coherent system. All learning and knowledge occurs through the activation of this Integral cycle. As we will see, these dynamics have a crucial role to play in how we can situate spiritual concerns in the workplace.



This AQAL framework of quadrants, levels, lines and dynamics can be applied to individuals, teams, leaders and large social entities such as organisations. In the following, I will look at some approaches to spirituality in the organisational development and leadership fields and see how they can be situated within the integral theory model.

The final aspect of the Integral theory model I want to draw attention to is its scope of application. The AQAL framework of quadrants, levels, lines and dynamics can be applied to individuals and teams all the way up to whole organisations and even larger social entities.



Integral Theory is eminently suited to looking at the complexity of such social topics as spirituality. If we are to include spirituality as a legitimate concern in working life how are we to define it? All the studies looking at this topic have battled with the definitional issue. I hope to show how Integral theory can shed some light on this. As a starting point for this process I will focus first on the personal application of the model. That is, I will bring to bear the integral “lens” on the various types of spirituality that belong to the individual life in both its private and public domains.

DEFINITIONS OF SPIRITUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

The personal spirituality of individual employees in the workplace is a common starting point for many who attempt to define organisational spirituality. Here are some common definitions and views of personal spirituality in the workplace context (I draw on the work of several authors for these definitions particularly Neal, Lichtenstein and Banner (1999), Mitroff and Denton (1999), Eggert (1998), Cacioppe (2000a; 2000b), Burack (1999) and Moxley (2000).

Individual forms of spirituality

1. Interior personal spirituality: Spirituality is about the inner person and not institutional religion. It has to do with inner peace and, on occasion, profound peak experience.
2. Spirituality as virtuous behaviour: Here spirituality is seen as good deeds, and as following standards of virtuous behaviour. Spirituality is working towards the goals of a virtuous personal life and rejecting those things that threaten our human dignity.
3. Spirituality as service: Performing the social roles of work colleague, supervisor, friend, co-worker and neighbour in a way that creates harmony and good relations.
4. Spirituality as meaning in life: Spirituality as personal beliefs and ways of making meaning out of our work experiences and life circumstances.
5. Spirituality as motivating energy: This refers to the energising power, the enthusiasm that spirituality inspires in individuals. It is a motivating esprit that turns thought into action and individual need into communal/organisational service. It creates the spirited worker.
6. Spirituality as emerging growth and achieving potential: This is the evolutionary and transcendental drive towards the higher, the more elevated and towards the greater Kosmos. It can sometimes be associated with paths that focus on renewal of personal consciousness and behaviour through meditation practice.
7. Spirituality as healing descent: This is the involutory and integrative drive towards the more grounded, natural, and incarnated expression of the Spirit in the world. It can sometimes be associated with paths that focus on the renewal of personal relationships and awareness of the other

through entering community and the nurturing of family and group.

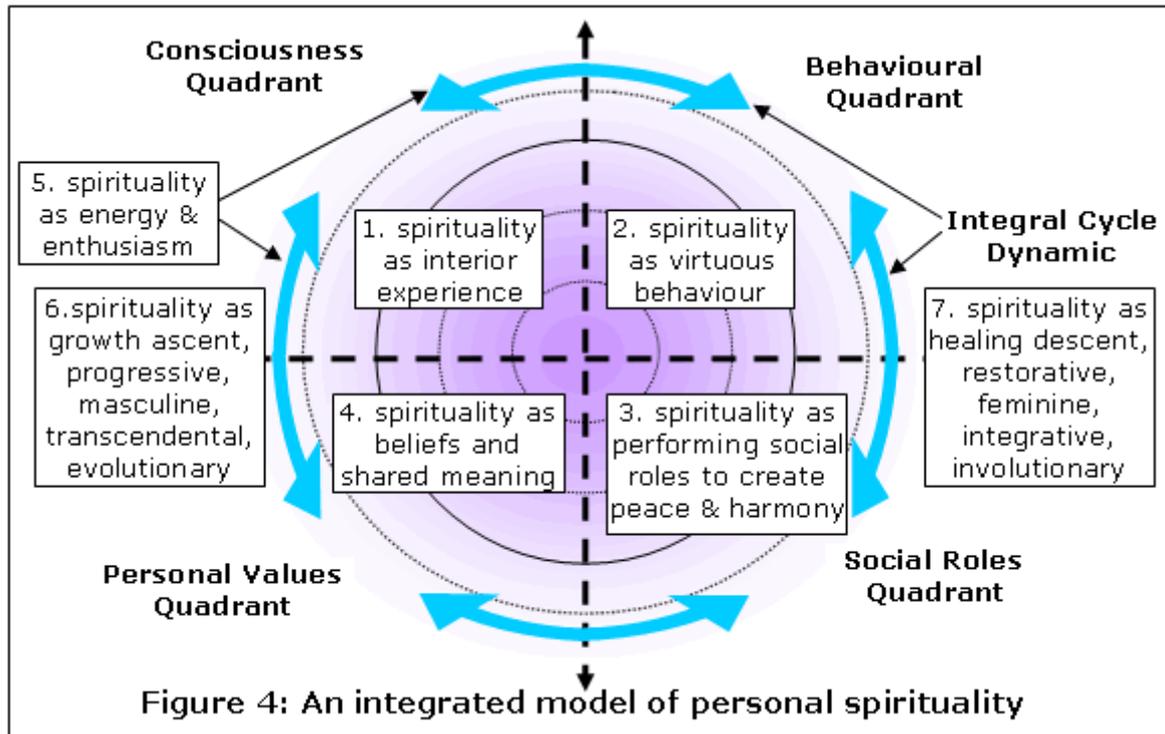


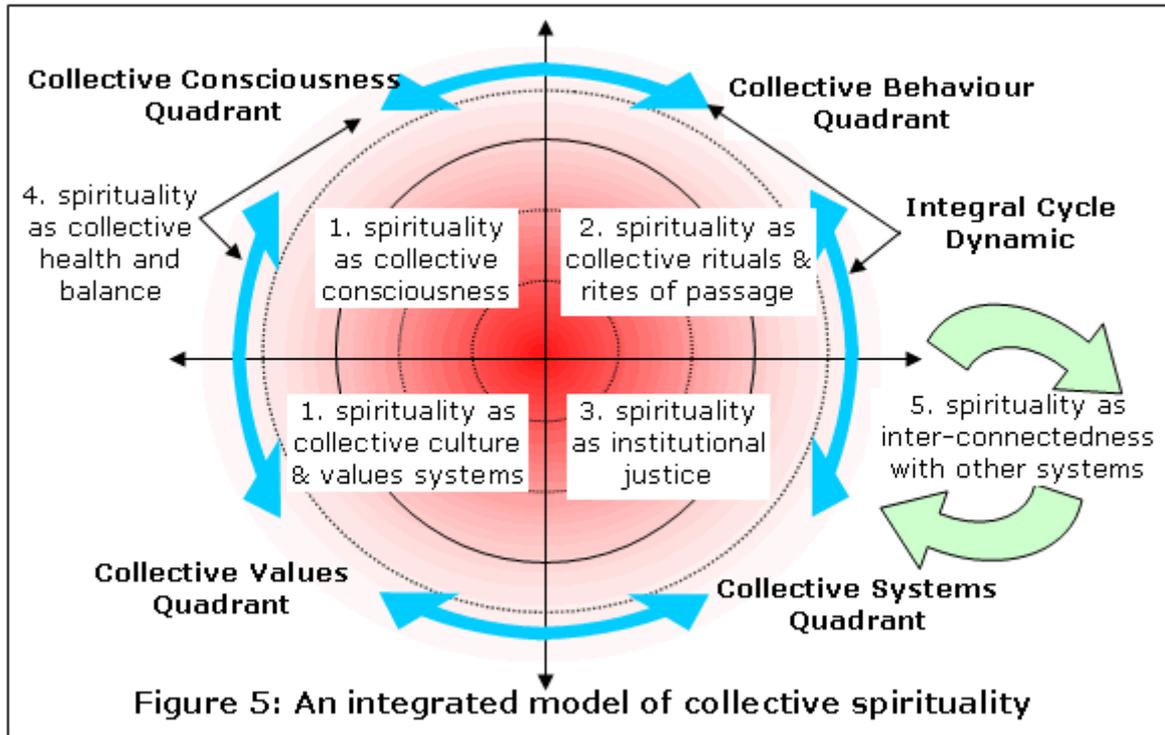
Figure 4 gives an indication of how these forms of spirituality can be situated within the Integral model. Each of the seven types of spirituality bring out the differing definitional characteristics spirituality has been associated with. The Integral model provides a framework for untangling these definitions and provides a basis for further clarity in discussion. Some of these forms have more relevance to the workplace than others. Some of them can be more easily recognised and catered for in the workplace than others. Some of them can be talked about and have a language that is more appropriate to workplace environments than others. However, each of them have their part to play in understanding how the spiritual can impact of the lives of people in the home, in their community and in the workplace environment.

Collective forms of spirituality

There are also many orientations towards spirituality that relate to collective identity and social action (see Figure 5). These include:

1. Spirituality as collective consciousness and culture: Here spirituality is the stories, archetypes and mythologies of the community. It is the inner connectedness with land and with traditions and the cultural being of a community.
2. Spirituality as collective devotion and ritual: Sacramental spirituality. Communal prayer and ceremony and rites of passage.
3. Spirituality as social justice: Spirituality is the peaceful removal of inequalities and injustices that oppress and hinder the free development of people, families and communities.
4. Spirituality as collective health: The health and stable balance of the community is the result of both culture and social systems and communal identity and collective action.
5. Spirituality as social relationship: Spirituality is the connectedness that a community has with those around it - other communities and organisations. It is the mutual respect between communities and social entities that comes from acknowledging the larger whole. As Alan Nohre remarks (2001):

If you want your mission statement to reflect more soul, ask questions about the larger community. Ask how your company fits into the whole, as if we – our business, our employees, everyone in our community – were one. This is a spiritual perspective.



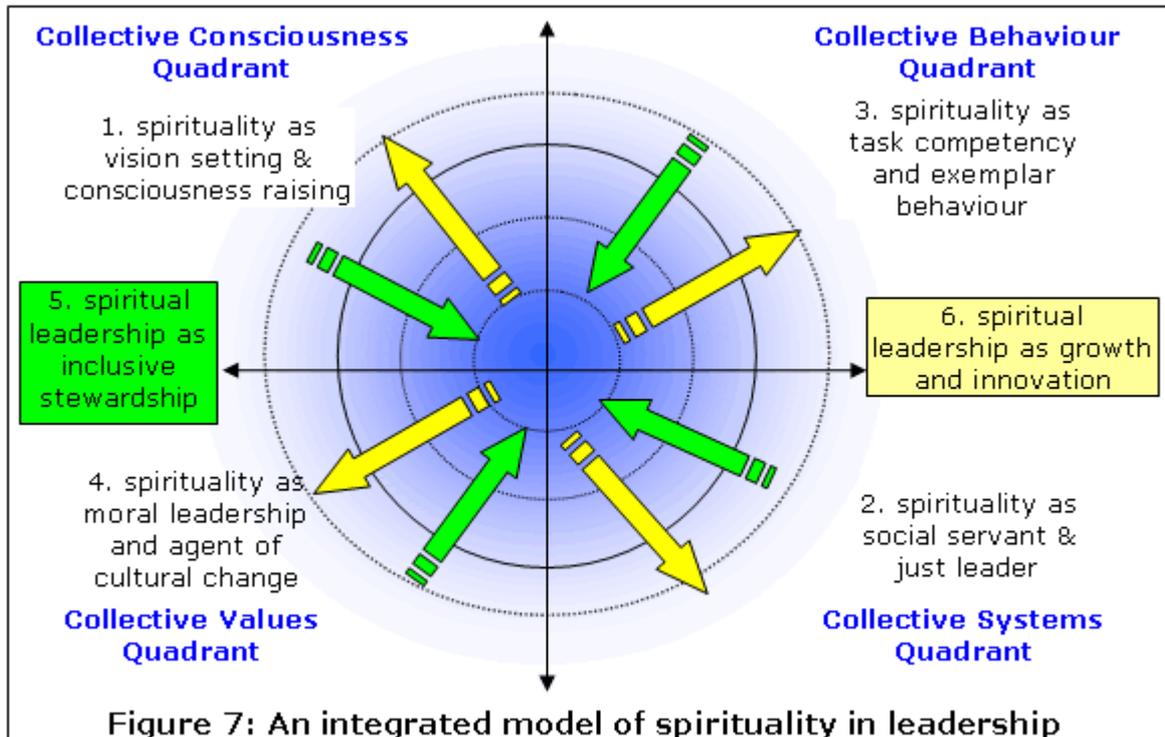
Figures 4 and 5 show that these individual and collective definitions of spirituality can be accommodated within the Integral model using the AQAL principles. Apart from these more general applications, the model also allows for very detailed analyses. For example, definitions of spirituality often refer to the experience of unusual states and particular levels of spiritual experience consciousness and even to regressive and pathological forms of spirituality. Table 1 gives an overview of the Integral approach to the levels or stages of spiritual development that often accompany the growth process in both individuals and collectives. James Fowler’s stages of faith are perhaps the most famous example of this “spectrum” of spiritual development.

Table 1: Levels of development and a corresponding form of spirituality

Level of Development after Wilber, (2003)	A Corresponding Form of Spirituality
Mystic	Transpersonal - integrated transformative spirituality
Holistic	Holistic spirituality – dynamic evolutionary spirituality
Pluralistic	Ecumenism – including all traditions
Mature Egoic	Secular Humanism – atheistic/humanistic service
Early Egoic	Mainstream ritualism – “going to church”
Mythic	Fundamentalism – obeying the One True God
Magic	Superstition and Magic – appeasing the gods
Archaic	Animism – worship of nature spirits

SPIRITUALITY AND LEADERSHIP

The vital issue of the spirituality of leadership and how that impacts on the spirituality in the workplace is perhaps the most important single issue in this whole area. Once again the various models of leadership and spirituality can be gainfully represented through the application of the Integral model. Several authors point to common aspects of the spiritual leadership process (Congar, 1994; Eggert, 1998; Fairholm, 1997; Moxley, 2000). These include: 1) vision setting; 2) servant leadership; 3) task competence; and 4) moral standards. These functions operate with in context of 5) stewardship; and 6) continuous improvement and innovation. These elements correspond to the basic Integral theory principles as shown in Figure 7.



True spiritual leadership is the capacity to integrate these different elements of inspirational guidance. In particular, the inclusion of interior vision and moral depth with the exemplary behaviour are the true hallmarks of spiritual leaders. The educator Katherine Scott makes this point (1994, p.65):

Leadership that acknowledges and integrates the spiritual does not flee from the deep divide between the private and the public ... It is in the integration of the inner and outer worlds that true spirituality can be distinguished from false.

Nancy Eggert (1998) has described a model of contemplative leadership that incorporates the four types of leadership spirituality identified in Figure 5. She calls these the paths of:

1. Appreciation - of the material world (Integral Theory's behavioural quadrant);
2. Detachment - by letting go and letting be (Integral Theory's consciousness quadrant);
3. Creativity - and communicating insight (Integral Theory's cultural quadrant);
4. Compassion – by means of social justice (Integral theory's social quadrant).

These four types of contemplative leadership are based on the assumption that “the contemplative leadership style is not an accomplishment but a gift, an ever deepening awareness of oneself and the situation” (Eggert, 1998, p.265). In the end spirituality in leadership is a mysterious but unmistakable quality that arises out of the interplay of the interior life, the social milieu and the demands and crises that beset individuals and organisations and societies.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing has translated some of the more common perspectives on spirituality in the workplace into an Integral theory framework. This enables a more pluralistic and integrative vision of spirituality to emerge. There are several important implications of this more inclusive understanding for organisations and change agents who wish to raise the profile of such issues.

First, the Integral approach recognises the diversity of types of spiritualities in individuals, leaders and collectives. It also brings these diverse elements into a coherent picture that makes sense and which is communicable in ways that people can identify with. Everyone, for example, can relate to the ideas of an interior life of experience and consciousness and an exterior life of behaviour and social roles. Everyone responds to the notion that development is about integrating and sustaining what we have as well as growth

and innovation. As shown here, these Integral principles are also easy to present in graphic terms for those more visual learners.

Second, the model present a framework for taking positive steps in achieving the goal of a more spirited and inspiring workplace. All the types of spiritualities presented here are valid and each can contribute to the revitalisation of organisational life. The Integral model can identify gaps and opportunities for introducing a range of strategies aimed at encouraging enthusiasm and generosity of spirit in it leaders, employees work teams and decision making bodies. One particularly useful aspect of the model is that it can be used to identify aberrant or pathological forms of spirituality of which there are many. These include fundamentalist, dissociative spiritualities, and materialistic or consumerist spiritualities. Although Integral theory is pluralistic, it does not support the contention that spirituality is all things to all people. It recognises the validity in the diversity of views and assimilates them into a rigorous framework where the limitations, vulnerabilities and strengths of each are acknowledged.

Third, the model provides a strong rationale for using measures of organisational culture, worker satisfaction levels and leadership values. The assessment of current practices and attitudes leads directly to an appropriate planning and goal-identification process. Once some idea is gained about the actual state of spiritual development that the organisation and/or workplace operates from, realistic and meaningful aims and objectives can be set. For example, many organisations have poor levels or no communication between management and staff in areas such as ethics, staff relations, community responsibility, personal beliefs or leadership values. From such a position it is unlikely in the extreme that any support would be forthcoming for implementing strategies to bring true spirit into the workplace.

Finally, the Integral approach respects the worldviews and needs that exist within organisations and individuals but also provides some idea about the direction that development in this area can take. This also assumes that a balance is required for stable and healthy development. Growth in interior culture generates and is supported by growth in exterior behaviours and organisational systems. Raised awareness and enthusiasm in individuals and generates and is supported by that of leaders and the decision-making bodies of the organisation.

Spirituality is a whole that has many faces. The Integral model of All Quadrants, All Levels, All Lines and All Dynamics helps us to see those faces in their many guises and manifestations. In so doing it creates a way of considering the rightful and appropriate place of the spirit and the spiritual in the workplace. Successful organisation of the future will recognise where that place is. Spirituality in contemporary life will only flourish if it gains a place of value within organisational life. The growing complexity and global nature of today's world demands a very great deal of people and organisations and one source of energy for meeting that demand will be the well-spring of the human spirit. One final quote from Mitroff and Denton (1999, p.14)

This age calls out for a new "spirit of management". For us the concepts of spirit and soul are not merely add-on elements of a new philosophy or policy of management. Instead they are the very essence of such a philosophy or policy. No management effort can survive without them. We refuse to accept that whole organizations cannot learn ways to foster soul and spirituality in the workplace. We believe not only that they can but that they must.

As the 21st century proceeds spirituality in the workplace will become a regular feature of our working lives rather than an oddity. It will have many forms and guises, some of which have been presented here in the coherent and comprehensive framework of Integral Theory. All of these forms of the human spirit will have the potential to enthuse and inspire organisations and community leaders and as a result be "good for business".

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