

A Primer in Spirituality for Well-Being in the Workplace

Institute for Medicine, Education and Spirituality at
Ochsner (IMESO)

DeConciliis @ IMESO

2018

All Rights Reserved

The Birth of Spirituality

- ▶ The natural development of spirituality is a response to an instinctive human desire to find meaning and a way to spiritualize each human action, thought, and feeling.
- ▶ The brain acts to support connections with others which are so important for personal well-being. Is it possible that our brain is wired for spirituality? Can cooperation, compassion, empathy and other important behaviors related to well-being be a product of neural connections? Researchers are now attempting to demonstrate a relationship between these virtues and burnout in medicine.
- ▶ The Human Brain: Hardwired for Spirituality.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCeOBu6g8Kg>

Spirituality and Religion

“All scholars studying religion are deeply aware that definitions of religion and spirituality are porous, historically variable, marked by varieties of evident and implicit theological understandings, and always remain open to the charge that they are either too general or too specific.” (Courtney Bender)

Religion and Spirituality

- ▶ Religion is a structured belief system that addresses universal spiritual questions and provides universal spiritual questions and a framework for making sense out of existence.
- ▶ Religion is a set of moral beliefs and perceptions shared by a group of people to explain and understand human existence. The outcome is a share set of values and behaviors to which followers adhere.
- ▶ Spirituality is an outgrowth of religion which relates to issues of purpose, hope, and relationships. In the workplace, it allows people of all denominations or no denominations to work together to create an organization that is united in its beliefs in a greater meaning to their lives at work.

Religion, Spirituality, and Healing Intention

- ▶ Religion and Spirituality are not mutually exclusive. For those who find life to be sacred, there is little difference between religion and spirituality. Both express different aspects of transcendence and wisdom.
- ▶ Faith opens up a broad conversation, especially in the reciprocal relationship of a physician and a patient.
- ▶ Some organizations are faith-friendly but not faith-based.

Spirituality and Meaning at Work

- ▶ A spiritually alive organization enables its members to feel that their days at work contribute more than just accomplishing tasks and earning financial compensation.
- ▶ These organizations offer members an opportunity to feel that they are contributing to a greater good and a higher purpose. These allow people to rise above the needs of self and to contribute beyond their personal gain.

Definitions of Spirituality

Bernard McGinn offers three approaches or categories to summarize the definitions of spirituality.

- ▶ 1. Theological/Dogmatic Approach – stress theology and not science.
- ▶ 2. Anthropological Approach – stresses a depth dimension of human nature and experience.
- ▶ 3. Historical Contextual Approach – rooted in a particular historical context.

Contextual Approach

McGinn favors the historical contextual approach

- Implies the beliefs of that community
- Implies the study which formalizes these beliefs
- Identifies the truth claims of these beliefs.

Definitional Components of Spirituality

- ▶ Nash (2001) provides a rubric to codify existing definitions in three universal components of spirituality.
 - The inner self
 - The forces greater than the individual
 - The search for significance in everyday life, including benevolence and other essential values.

Definitions of Spirituality

- ▶ Vauchez – “The dynamic unity of the content of faith and the way in which it is viewed by historically determined human beings.”
- ▶ VanBalthasar – “The basic practical or existential attitude which is the expression of how one understands ethically committed existence.”
- ▶ Pincipe – “The way a person understands and lives within his or her historical context, that aspect of his or her religion, philosophy or other, that is viewed as the loftiest, the noblest, the most calculated to lead to the fullness of the ideal or perfect being sought.”

Definitions of Spirituality

- ▶ Spirituality when considered as the subject matter or material object of the discipline is the “experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives.”

Sandra Schneiders, “The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline,” *Christian Spirituality Bulletin* 6 (Spring 1998): 1, 3. [Hereafter, “Contours”]
p.3

A Working Definition

- ▶ “Spirituality is the experience of consciously striving to integrate one’s life in terms not of isolation and self-absorption but of self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives.” Schneiders, op. cit., p. 684

Practice of Spirituality

The practice of spirituality is found in lived experiences that are reflected upon in a context of vocation and faith.

Spirituality Dimensions

- ▶ Three interrelated references in Schneider's definition of spirituality
 - 1. Fundamental Dimension of the human being
Choosing the dimension informed by an ultimate value which leads to self-transcendence
 - 2. Lived experience that actualizes that dimension
What one thinks and does to achieve that dimension
 - 3. Academic discipline that studies the experience.
How one learns from the ultimate dimension and adds to its development for others

Schneider's definition

“Toward the ultimate value one perceives” is broad enough to include major religions and spiritualities not necessarily influenced by established religions.

Ultimate Concern

- ▶ What constitutes an ultimate concern in life?

The Study of Spirituality

- ▶ What is the material object (what is being studied)? It is lived experience.
- ▶ What is the formal object (the perspective from which something is investigated)? It is the conscious integration.

Definition of Spirituality

- ▶ In Schneider's definition:

Spirituality is a project in which a person seeks to integrate his or her life. The goal is the development of self-transcendence. It is directed toward an ultimate value (dimension) as one perceives it. Finally, the project is intrinsically shaped by the experience of being consciously involved in the project.

Spirituality, thus, is a field of study which in an interdisciplinary way attempts to investigate spiritual experience, both as spiritual and as experience.

Spirituality and Fields of Study

- ▶ The study of spirituality is no longer merely focused on the inner life, but on the whole person. This demands that a new discipline has to be developed.
- ▶ In order to face this new discipline, those studying spirituality not only turn to theology, scripture or tradition, but now are interdisciplinary in their study incorporating fields of study such as history, psychology, sociology, science of religion, cultural anthropology, literary and aesthetic disciplines and a variety of other fields of study.

Spirituality Definition

- ▶ Questions are raised: Is there a secular spirituality? Is there spiritual meaning and more a spiritual quest in a scientific endeavor? For example, Ursula Goodenough in her book, *The Sacred Depths of Nature*, suggests that although she is unable to believe in a personal God, she revels in a sense of connectedness with other living beings that can only be described as sacred (Wiseman, p. 5).

Spirituality Developed and Passed On

- ▶ Principe understood the development of spirituality through three interrelated levels:
 - 1. The real or existential level – the actual lived experience in terms of attitudes, dispositions, and practices of daily existence. It is the understanding and living an ideal (the dimension in Schneider's terms).

Spirituality Development

- 2. Spirituality as lived experience which actualizes the reality in community -- in family, parish or congregation. It includes geography or culture.
- 3. Applying a scholarly examination of levels one and two to ascertain living faith and commitment toward living the ideal or goal and finding meaning and practice of the spiritual life.

Exercise On Spirituality Development

- ▶ Based on Schneider's definition of spirituality, what is the ultimate value --self-transcendent dimension -- that you are striving to achieve or accomplish in your career and life?
- ▶ Give specific behaviors that express that dimension in your personal and career life.
- ▶ If someone studied your life thus far, would they recognize the dimension you are attempting to achieve?

Spirituality – American Styles

- ▶ Ways of knowing the divine. Each one to some degree is grounded in and expressed within religious traditions, institutions, and organizations (Albanese 2001).
- ▶ “Spirituality is the personal, experiential element in religion.”

Spirituality – American Styles

- ▶ Four dominant American Styles
- ▶ **Knowing the Body** –includes corporate and individual rituals and practices
- ▶ **Knowing the Heart** – emotion and experience central
- ▶ **Knowing the Will** – social justice and prophetic
- ▶ **Knowing the Mind** –pursue metaphysical connection to the divine

American Styles : Historical Point of View

- ▶ Spirituality involves ways of knowing expressed in action, devotion, and theology.
- ▶ Spiritual traditions emphasize different ways of knowing; some more emphasis on ways of the heart rather than knowing through the mind.

Spirituality Seekers

- ▶ Spiritual not religious – the connections between being spiritual and being religious are far from clear.
- ▶ Many do not participate in an organized religious tradition.
- ▶ Spiritual orientation is mediated through the marketplace of spirituality.

Spirituality Seekers

- ▶ Spirituality seekers do not necessarily originate from mainstream religious traditions, but rather from a self-generation of spiritual thought that has a history, institutions, prophets, theological principles, and practices that influence and shape thought.
- ▶ High value placed on individual self-reliance and perfection, and the ability to seek wisdom from diverse religious sources.
- ▶ In this type of tradition are movements like Christian Science.

Spirituality Seeker – William James

- ▶ James studied religious experience as evidenced in his celebrated book – Varieties of Religious Experience.
- ▶ He defined religious experience as “the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they can apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine.”

w. James and Spirituality

- ▶ Spirituality for James became something to be scientifically examined. The study developed by several generations of scholars established spirituality as the experiences of men “in their solitude” which emphasized individual and pre-cultural experiences.

Spirituality and Religion – Varying Relationship

- ▶ Spiritual but not religious
 - Claim: A person might claim that he or she is spiritual, but not religious. Here spirituality, the preferred state, connotes a pure relation to the divine or the sacred that is unsullied by human institutions and authorities. It can mean a rejection of mainstream, organized religion.
- ▶ Result: Spiritualities were developed – feminist, environmental, alternative medicine, etc. as a way of confronting stands in organized traditions.

Spiritual and Medicine

- ▶ Rapprochement between spiritual and medicine is beginning to surface.
- ▶ Alternative medicine is now much more widely accepted as integrative or complementary – meditation, prayer, touch, etc.

Spiritual is More Than Religion

- ▶ This position holds that being spiritual is more than being in a religion.
- ▶ Religion here is a second-order to the first-order of spiritual experiences suggesting that spiritual is the universal, common experience.

Spiritual is More than Religion

A humanistic view sees religious traditions as repositories of human endeavors to develop the spiritual life and not as a perennial faith tradition.

This type of spirituality is criticized for being critical of faith traditions and denying the perennial truths found in revealed religion in order for more liberal appeals for ecumenical outlooks.

Questions for Reflection

- ▶ What are the implications of someone claiming to be “spiritual but not religious?”
- ▶ What are the implications of someone claiming to be both religious and spiritual?
- ▶ What are the implications of someone claiming to be neither religious or spiritual?

Questions for Reflection

- ▶ Do you have a better way of defining spirituality?
- ▶ Have there been any particular experiences in your own life that gave you some insight into what you might understand by the term “spiritual experience.”
- ▶ As a health care provider at Ochsner, are you ever asked to pray with a patient?

Spirituality and Culture

- ▶ Spirituality in Business and Industry, referred to as workplace spirituality. Five factors mark the spiritual caliber of a business enterprise:
 - 1. A sound business code where central values are defined and strategies for completion are clearly marked out
 - 2. Quality of the product and evaluation to test quality
 - 3. Appreciation and attention to the care of the employees and how employees relate to one another
 - 4. The social contributions of the company to the larger community
 - 5. Attention to the environmental quality

Spirituality and Education

- ▶ Spirituality in all facets of the educational process imply the following cultural changes:
 - 1. A greater focus on values and the aspects of spiritual formation which includes a philosophy of life in addition to providing knowledge and skills.
 - 2. A consciousness-raising process about spirituality among those who refuse to include it in the workplace

Spirituality and Health Care

- ▶ Healthcare is recognizing the need for the integration of spirituality
 - 1. Patients are not their illness – the body must not be medicalized or isolated from the spirit. Patients are people with an integrity of their own.
 - 2. The perspective of care – the spiritual aspect of each patient needs to be explicitly involved in the care provided by physicians, nurses, and all health care providers.

Spirituality and Natural Sciences

- ▶ Common ground between natural sciences and spirituality is beginning to emerge.
 - 1. The search for meaning, wisdom, values and the depth structure of reality are becoming co-determinative.
 - 2. Both investigate the deeper layers of reality so as to make intelligible the meaning of the concrete world.
(book, *Physics as Metaphor*, by R. Jones 1983)
 - 3. Spirituality and science are linked by the structure of the search process—a passion for truth.

Questions for Reflection

- ▶ Do you see an integration of spirituality and science in your own professional lives?
- ▶ If so, how?