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THE SCOPE AND IMPLICATIONS OF SPIRITUALITY: A DUAL APPROACH

Anselmo Ferreira Vasconcelos*

Abstract

This paper sheds more light on the topic of spirituality by clarifying what it embraces by means of a dual approach: it examines the secular literature as well as collecting related teachings and tenets from Spiritism Doctrine. Although the discipline of spirituality is relatively young and its ontology needs consensus, it is noticeable that spirituality adopts different and competing things. It unfolds through the deep understanding about the meaning of life, human nature, and the adoption of a transcendental perspective. It argues that we live in a suitable moment on this planet to take advantage of transformative potential derived from spiritual knowledge for the betterment of the human community. The evidence gathered here shows that by developing our own spirituality we can transform ourselves and our creations, including society and institutions. The approach of this endeavor reveals that both science and religion agree that the spiritual element permeates all things.

Keywords: God. Spiritism doctrine. Management systems. Spiritual capability. Spiritual needs. Spiritual transformation.

O ÂMBITO E IMPLICAÇÕES DA ESPIRITUALIDADE: UMA ABORDAGEM DUAL

Resumo

Este artigo busca trazer mais entendimento sobre o tópico da espiritualidade através do esclarecimento do que ele abarca por meio de um enfoque duplo. Mais especificamente, examina-se a literatura secular, assim como são arrolados ensinamentos e princípios da Doutrina Espírita correspondentes. Embora a disciplina da espiritualidade seja relativamente recente e sua ontologia necessita de consenso, chega a ser notável que ela adote diferentes e paralelas coisas. Ela desdobra-se através do profundo entendimento a respeito do significado da vida, natureza humana e a adoção da perspectiva transcendental. O texto argumenta que nós vivemos um momento adequado nesse planeta para o aproveitamento do potencial transformativo derivado do conhecimento espiritual para o aperfeiçoamento da comunidade humana. A evidência colhida aqui mostra que através do desenvolvimento da nossa espiritualidade nós podemos transformar a nós próprios e as nossas criações, incluindo a sociedade e as instituições. O enfoque desse trabalho revela que ambas ciência e religião estão de acordo que o elemento espiritual permeia todas as coisas.

Palavras-chave: Deus. Doutrina espírita. Sistemas de gestão. Capacidade espiritual. Necessidades espirituais. Transformação espiritual.

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Introduction

Although mankind has already reached an extraordinary stage of social development and well-being in many nations, not to mention the scientific and technological feats, it has not been enough to deal with all perils, traps, and signals of disruption of contemporary life. On the surface, it appears that we need more effective coping mechanisms in order to deal with such a range of problems and challenges. More specifically, we need to connect to a wiser knowledge or source on a daily basis to strengthen our inner capabilities or even develop new ones. At the same time, there is ample evidence showing that our civilization is facing a crucial moment. Notwithstanding the signals of progress, there exists a set of undesirable aspects permeating our planet such as: terrorist groups, blind faith, people alienation, intolerance, inequalities, hunger, wars, climate change, racial discrimination, extreme poverty, and plagues. Overall, this landscape suggests that such things have taken place because the elementary notions of spirituality have been sidelined. Nevertheless, "In an increasingly complex and materialistic world, understanding spirituality can also provide us with a new kind of tool for coping better with the challenges of our practical lives [...]" (WOLMAN, 2001, p. 8).

Therefore, the spiritual capability may be very helpful to engender people's inner-focused skills to handle unexpected events and situations, including inward problems. Indeed, this is a critical moment for the development of our species requiring a spiritual awakening so as to enact radical changes toward the betterment of every human being. In this sense, it is undeniable that the sort of "spiritual agony of the earth and its people is perhaps greater than ever before, calling on all our sensibilities and powers of attention" (KING, 2008, p. 42). In fact, the search for happiness, a life full of joy, worth living, social success, health, and flourishing are common human goals. Why should not spirituality be added to this list? (BOUCKAERT, 2011; KING, 2008). After all, the spiritual life is seen as a core component of human essence, that is, a "defining-characteristic of human nature" (MASLOW, 1993, p. 314). Although "everyone has a spiritual life", it is not absolutely taken for granted. Unfortunately, "many may ignore, actively deny or vigorously flee from the unseen order doesn't mean they are not spiritual beings; it only means they are trying to avoid, or are unaware of, the fact" (HOWARD; WELBOURN, 2004, p. 43).

Despite the relevance attributed to the theme of spirituality in people's lives and in distinguished cultures, it is astonishing that it has been somewhat ignored in the development of psychological needs theories. In fact, it was neglected by the most prominent theories of human needs (VAN DIERENDONCK, 2012). In contrast, systems scientists have paid attention to spirituality and describing it as "something essential" that has not been appropriately examined. It is believed that "the combination of scientific research and spiritual search, not only helps us to know how and why things happen the way they do but also tells us something about our own selves" (KHISTY, 2010, p. 116-117). Further, it is posited that research on spirituality may provide the necessary level of objectivity to the realm of subjective or, in other words, it brings science to the field of sacred knowledge (WOLMAN, 2001).

On the other hand, the concept of spirituality has gained impetus in contemporary discourse given that it has been associated with new social practices and cultural products sometimes labeled as "New Age." Unsurprisingly, nowadays people are comfortable to pursue spiritual beliefs or principles as long as they are not linked with any sort of religion (HUSS, 2014; ROSE, 2001). In this sense, it is worth pointing out that the spiritual search is regarded as "the attempt to identify what is sacred and worthy of devotion" (EMMONS, 1999, p. 91). Taken as a whole, therefore, we have now a very favorable momentum toward increasing consciousness related to the positive perspectives that encompass the topic of spirituality (VASCONCELOS, 2010). However, there remain many doubts about the meaning of spirituality given that its larger scope and implications go even further than those under the domain of theological literature (CALVANI, 2014). Accordingly, this paper attempts to contribute to fulfill this theoretical gap by offering suitable explanations and logical arguments to a very intriguing topic that challenges our understanding about the deeper meaning of reality in which we all are embedded.

The purpose of this paper is to shed more light on the topic of spirituality by clarifying what it embraces (i.e., meaning, core aspects, implications to human life, benefits, potential connections with organizations, society and nature, among other things) by means of a dual approach (scientific and religious). Rather than trusting only one source of knowledge to unravel such a sensitive theme, it tries to elicit the best arguments of each. Thus, it reviews the secular literature, as well as collecting related teachings and tenets from the Spiritism Doctrine (SD)¹. Spirituality, in its purest sense, is a sort of raw material intensively explored by SD teachings. Indeed, it provides insightful and interesting answers to many transcendental issues raised here.

Given the complex nature of the subject, I hasten to point out that organizational issues (a major topic of this publication) are, broadly speaking, embedded throughout the analysis. Regarding the difficulties to explore it exclusively under such a perspective, because the literature is scarce, oftentimes it is tacitly underlined. However, the general aspects that are examined here are certainly useful to institutions, organizations, and individuals. By assuming that spirituality "touches every aspect of contemporary life" (WOLMAN, 2001, p. 11) it then becomes important to determine whether the pertinent body of knowledge corroborates such a view. At this juncture, it is germane to point out that

There are many signs that we are spiritually progressing, not regressing – that a new spiritual birth is occurring in our contemporary world, which is a new world based on new experience, new vision, and the perception of a new global community. It is a universal, ecological, and mystical spirituality deeply linked to the perception of nature, of the world as a whole, and our place in it [...] (KING, 2008, p. 22).

Therefore, after this brief introduction, the following section of the paper essentially examines the modern origins of spirituality. Subsequently, it tries to define spirituality. Thirdly, it discusses what spirituality encompasses and other-related aspects, as well as exploring its development and practices. Fourthly, it analyzes its potential benefits. Finally, it depicts some implications, challenges, and conclusions.

Modern origins

To begin with, it is important to clarify that spirituality is fundamentally related to our own origin (KARDEC, 2003a). By all means, it is not a novel theme, yet it is regarded now as a prominent subject related to the quality of life of both children and adults. Accordingly, education may perform a key role to prepare future generations about how to deal with it in an appropriate manner (WOLMAN, 2001). To some extent, the notion of spirituality has permeated the human journey on this planet since the ancient times. When our ancestors greeted some deity – perhaps the thunder, sun, moon or other physical manifestations – they were essentially connecting with a superior power and enacting a kind of spiritual ritual. By drawing on the shamans or priests' counseling or guidance to solve their daily problems or to ask protection from some bad spirit they revealed to believe in something more powerful. These practices continue to take part in many people's lives worldwide. Furthermore, it is worth remembering that the spiritual issue is so intertwined with humankind's trajectory that both the Old and New Testaments are replenished with teachings related to spirituality.² However,

1 *Spiritism or Spiritist Doctrine is a relatively new doctrine given that it has been around for just a century and a half. Despite this, its thoughtful tenets and principles have been disseminated worldwide, especially in Latin and North America, as well as Europe. Unlike other traditional religions, its principles are strongly supported: by faith in the hereafter; on the phenomenon of the spirits' messages and teachings through mediums; on Jesus Christ's teachings (the Gospel) and his behavior as a paradigm of perfection to be followed by all human beings; and by the practice of charity (see, e.g., VASCONCELOS, 2012, for a synthesis of its principles).*

2 *For example, we find in Isaiah (11:2) the following excerpt: "And the spirit of the LORD will rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD" (Webster Bible Translation; available at: <http://biblehub.com/wbt/isaiah/11.htm>). The apostle Paul, in turn, remarked in 1 Corinthians 10:4: "And all drank the same spiritual drink: (for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ)" (Webster Bible Translation, available at: http://biblehub.com/wbt/1_corinthians/10.htm).*

there is some consensus indicating that the modern spirituality studies have gained impetus since the second half of the nineteenth century (e.g., HUSS, 2014; VAN DER VEER, 2009). In this regard, it is noteworthy Allan Kardec's (2003a) findings related to *spirits' manifestations* and spiritual life.³

The term "spirituality" has retained its adherence to the intangible world, that is, the metaphysical, incorporeal, and immaterial. Nevertheless, it has also been perceived as a blend of (sometimes conflicting) constructs and issues such as: religious, metaphysical, moral, subjective, private, experiential, physical, material, public, social, economic, and political arena, to name a few. At present, the dual perception (i.e., the spiritual and the corporeal/material) has become blurred in the current definitions and usages of the term (HUSS, 2014). Also noteworthy is that spirituality seemingly encompasses our relationships by means of a range of distinguished things such as sacredness of life, nature, the universe, and thus it is no more conceptually limited to the traditional places of worship (TACEY, 2004).

Trying to define spirituality

Although the discipline of spirituality is relatively young and its ontology needs consensus, it is noticeable that the concept of spirituality adopts, as highlighted above, different and competing things. As rightly noted by Twigg and Parayitam (2006), "People often employ a spirituality term depending on the context and purpose" (p. 118). By examining some definitions, Ashar and Lane-Maher (2004) posit that "Spirituality is an innate and universal search for transcendent meaning in one's life" (p. 253). Similarly, Chamiec-Case (2006) proposes that spirituality is the "*person's search for and fulfillment of that which gives ultimate meaningful purpose to their lives*" (p. 21, italics in the original). Seen as a mindset, it is posited to cover a set of goals related to transcendental, inclusive, universal, and sacred. Proponents of this line of reasoning argue that spirituality is more concerned with the general good in detriment of selfish interests (SRIRANGARAJAN; BHASKAR, 2001, p. 95). In contrast, to Van Dierendonck (2012) spirituality represents a way of "living according to an inner truth, an awareness of an inner spiritual dimension" (p. 689).

Note that these definitions emphasize the idea of one's *search for* something greater and seemingly conducive to the feelings of self-fulfillment and meaning. Within this understanding, the locus is always the individual. On the other hand, Mitroff and Denton (1999) have gone even further by proposing that

Spirituality is the fundamental feeling that you are a part of and connected to everything, the entire physical universe and all of humanity. It is also the belief that there is a higher power or god – whatever it is and whatever we call it – that governs everything. Spirituality is not only *believing* that everyone has a soul, but *knowing* this and being in constant communication with one's own soul (p. 46, italics in the original).

The insightful definition depicted above broadens the general comprehension about what spirituality means by adding the notions of connection, integration,

³ "It was in 1854 that Prof. Rivail heard about the "turning tables", a mediumistic phenomenon that was agitating Europe. In Paris, he did his first studies on Spiritism. He applied the experimental method in order to peruse the new science, that is, he never formulated pre-conceived theories; he observed intently; he compared and deduced the consequences; and he always looked for reason and logic in the facts. He questioned the Spirits, made notes, and organized the data he had. That is why he is called the Codifier of Spiritism. The authors of the Doctrine are the Superior Spirits. At the beginning, Rivail's objective was just his own education. Only later on, when he realized the materials he had formed a body of knowledge and had the scope of a Doctrine, he decided to publish a book for the education of all. And thus, he launched *The Spirits' Book* on the 18 of April 1857. He adopted the pseudonym Allan Kardec, his name in a previous life, in order to differentiate the Spiritist works from the pedagogical works he had previously published" (THE SPIRITIST PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY, 2014). In a related vein, it is worth pointing out that many SD supporters believe that the modern spiritualist movement started even earlier the events abovementioned. Rather, it is believed that it started in Hydesville, New York, on a late March day in 1848 involving rapping communication among the Fox sisters and the spirit Charles B. Rosna (see, e.g., FIRST SPIRITUAL TEMPLE, 2014, for an interesting description of the case).

inseparability, and mysticism in which everyone is bound. In a related vein, spirituality has also been described as covering “all human experiences”, particularly those derived from human imagination, creativity, resourcefulness, as well as the relationships with oneself, other, or a transcendent reality, and finally being expressed through different symbols (e.g., divine, energy, God, love, silence, spirit, unity, and wisdom) (KING, 2011; LOZANO; RIBERA, 2004).

At a most fundamental level, however, spirituality is regarded as “wisdom for living” (KING, 2008, p. 31). Seen in this way, it embraces the development of love, the search for a common bond between individuals, the experience of selflessness, and service to others (VAZIN, 2013). Broadly speaking, when our own spirituality is triggered, it enacts “the greatest of our potentials” (PARGAMENT; MAHONEY, 2005, p. 654). In parallel, spirituality has been described as a process that activates the universal strengths which rest inside all of us ready to be put into action whenever we want (VASCONCELOS, 2008). It unfolds through the deep understanding about the meaning of life, human nature, and the adoption of transcendental perspective. Taken together, such aspects shape a micro and macro view about everything that surrounds us. At the same time, it inspires our behavior, attitudes, thoughts, and decision makings.

By and large, theorists agree that spirituality is a concept hard to define and describe (EMMONS, 1999; KING, 2010; VAN DER VEER, 2009), given that it is simultaneously seen as a multi-faceted construct, multi-dimensional, and multi-level phenomenon (GOTSIS; KORTEZI, 2008; PANDEY; GUPTA; ARORA., 2008). Illustrative of such an understanding is the proliferation of neologisms such as creation spirituality, ecospirituality, ecofeminist spirituality, global spirituality, integral spirituality, interfaith spirituality, and interspirituality, to name a few (KING, 2008, 2011). Indeed, King (2011) adds new conceptualizations to the spiritual concept. In her view, it makes sense, for example, the usage of the word *spiritualities* (the plural of spirituality) given that such a perception embraces a set of ideas, practices, activities, and commitments that permeate human lives (both individually and communally). Such a perception captures more complex and transformative dynamics whereby our efforts toward sparking deeper awareness and responsibility are entwined with an ample spectrum of layers that shape the reality. In essence, as posited by King, spirituality involves a strong desire to put into action the thorniest process of both inner and outer transformation (and anecdotal evidence shows that it is not an easy endeavor), critical self-reflection, and usage of our spiritual capabilities in a manner that one can nurture our own lives and all people around us. Overall, the literature leads to the conclusion that the personal spiritual transformation involves one’s inner life (i.e., a review and change of beliefs, held values, perceptions, and opinions toward the sacred) and outer life experience (through attitudes, behavior, and personal agency). Accordingly, the individual starts to build a more meaningful corporeal life because it tends to be inspired by the wisdom of transcendent knowledge (see Figure 1).

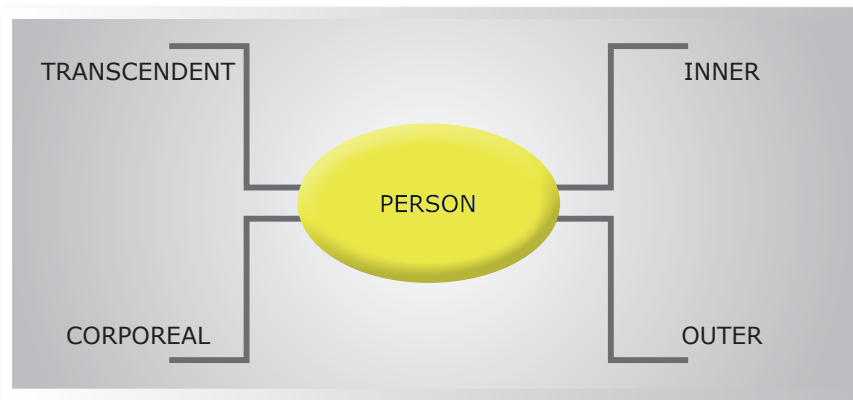


Figure 1 – Basic dimensions of spiritual transformation.

Source: The author.

It appears that "People who have strong inner spiritual resources are perceived as leading a desirable and a moral good life" (VAN DIERENDONCK, 2012, p. 697). On the other hand, evidence shows that we are living in dispirited societies. And it is a paradox because one speaks or writes about spirituality in the contemporary era than ever before. To transform our world in which every human being may have the possibility of a more enriched trajectory, it is vital, therefore, that we awake our own spirituality. After all, it is a human capacity, which is not necessarily engendered by a religious belief; nonetheless, it is clearly manifested through a moral understanding and behavior throughout life (THOMPSON, L. J., 2004).

As noted earlier, spirituality has been addressed as an alternative to religion, notwithstanding the spiritual ideals have been largely nurtured by philosophical and religious teachings (KING, 2008). Furthermore, spirituality is seen as non-dogmatic, non-exclusive, gender-neutral, and non-patriarchal (ALLEVATO; MARQUES, 2011). Although spiritual knowledge is strongly anchored within religions, there exist alternative paths as well. For example, it is suggested that "The emergence of spirituality as a concept enabled the inclusion of a variety of traditions under the rubric of universal morality without the baggage of competing religious institutions and their authoritative boundary maintenance [...]" (VAN DER VEER, 2009, p. 1106).

What is spirituality after all? Other-related aspects

Other constructs have been aggregated to the concept of spirituality bringing more complexity to the topic. In a certain stream of research, it is argued that "we are able to define spirituality less and less, because it includes more and more" on the grounds that it contains "*a multitude of activities and expectations*" (TACEY, 2004, p. 38, italics added). It has been associated with values and ethics (WESTON, 2002) as well as something essential for human flourishing (WILLIAMS, 2003, p. 1); it is linked to intuition and the right-brain (HOWARD; WELBOURN, 2004, p. 102); and it is some way connected to one's routine, that is, within the practical and physical aspects of life (BLANTON, 2007; HUSS, 2014). Moreover, it is posited that spirituality gives rise to novel taxonomies, as well as shaping new lifestyles, social practices, and cultural artifacts. In doing so, it blurs the current distinction between the realms of religion and the secular (HUSS, 2014, p. 51). Thus far, the evidence gleaned from the literature appears to converge to the conclusion that

Spirituality has become diverse, plural, manifold, and seems to have countless forms of expressions, many of which are highly individualistic and personal. Spirituality is now for everyone, and almost everyone seems to be involved, but in radically different ways. It is an inclusive term, covering all pathways that lead to meaning and purpose. It is concerned with connectedness and relatedness to other realities and existences, including other people, society, the world, the stars, the universe and the holy. [...] (TACEY, 2004, p. 38).

In a nutshell, the term spirituality "seems to be a neat catch-all" (ROSE, 2001, p. 193). It is so plentiful that it appears to involve everything. In its broadest sense, it is seen as "true leaven, a fermenting agent that may influence and shape every aspect of human life" (KING, 2008, p. 3). On the other hand, theory also contemplates a view toward the dark and potentially destructive side of life. Within this perspective, some aspects are particularly emphasized such as greed, exploitation, environmental degradation, abuse of power, failures, as well as instances like the individual, the organization, and the systemic paradigm (MCGEE; DELBECQ, 2003, p. 96; ZINNBAUER; PARGAMENT, 2005). In doing so, researchers confer more legitimacy to its meaning and scope. Darker realities, society malfunctioning, destructive leaderships, misbehavior, and mismanagement are also some salient features of our world. Such a conceptual framework suggests that "spirituality is not inherently good" and highly dependent on "the specific form of the individual's search for the sacred" (PARGAMENT; MAHONEY, 2005, p. 648). All in all, it seems that everyone has his/her own spirituality, but the direction or polarity in which it is used hinges upon individual free will. Such an understanding

is, by the way, reinforced by religious research. For instance, “[...] As the acts of men are the product of their *free will*, they retain the stamp of perfection or imperfection of the spirit that animate them [...]” (KARDEC, 1858, p. 117, italics added).

Therefore, our free will is vital in the process of enhancement of our spirituality. In a related view, it is advocated that “A spiritual perspective would argue that our spiritual duty is to use our free will to help and not harm others to further their ends (LIPS-WIERSMA; NILAKANT, 2008, p. 59). In this sense, Figure 2 tries to encapsulate this whole idea by presenting a continuum that ranges from an absolute negative pole to another completely positive one. Thus, the former embraces, for instance, well-known evil characters such as Adolph Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and, Osama bin Laden, inter alia. The common ground among them was their destructive leadership and guidance, as well as their intolerance and lack of love toward their neighbors. In a few words, they simply left tragic legacies for humankind. Importantly, this paper does not explore all potential damages, disruptions, and complexities yielded by such sort of leadership. Nonetheless, this is a theoretical endeavor that certainly deserves further attention.

In contrast, the latter embraces well-doer characters such as Jesus Christ, Saint Francis, Mahatma Gandhi, among others, whose lives were strongly linked to myriad of positive benefits, miracles, and teachings left to the human beings. More specifically, they left legacies of wisdom and love. Meanwhile, I surmise that in a more centralized position lies the overwhelming majority of humankind whose spirituality oscillates frequently between more positive and negative spiritual states. As noted by King (2008), we all have spiritual needs because it is basic to us human beings. Eventually, it may not be clearly addressed, but all human needs “are deeply intertwined with the spiritual, since anyone fully alive has to forge meaning out of the labors and trials of human existence” (p. 41).

Although many people have the ability of working their own spirituality, it does not mean that they are already capable of only doing well. I suspect that many people in this world are, in fact, unable to think right, cultivate positive emotions, and have good attitudes all the time or in a disciplined way. Perhaps it is fair to admit that they attempt - during the most part of their lives - to improve their degree of spirituality by working on their failures, misbehaviors, and misdemeanors. Conceivably, there are also a sizable number of people in this group that barely, if so, awakened to this matter, but they are not necessarily wrongdoers. They are most likely people with less interest in transcendental or religious matters. I propose that they are *not absolutely* urged by higher values, moral concerns or an ethical mindset. I predict that the need of ongoing self-criticism yields low effect on them. At the same time, the notion of self or ego satisfaction seems to dominate most of their wishes. In other words, they frankly do not nurture their souls with superior thoughts and goals as they should do. Hence, it is germane to understand that authentic spiritual growth sidelines “the self as the source of ultimate concern” and places “family, community, humanity, and divinity” at the core of the deliberations and thoughts (SHORE, 1997, cited in EMMONS, 1999, p. 109). In essence, spirituality involves personal transformation (EMMONS, 1999).

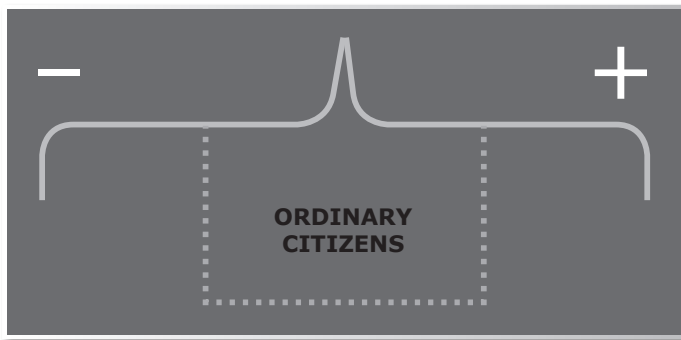


Figure 2 – Continuum of spirituality.

Source: The author.

The need for understanding spirituality is suggested as a “struggle for life” and must be implemented in all stages of life. It is conceptualized as a “force of survival”, a “power for change”. Nonetheless, spirituality is also connected and developed through a range of experiences of suffering and pain” (KING, 2008, p. 178), given that these states take part in people’s daily lives embracing equally the poorest and the richest, outstanding intellectuals and common citizens, saints and evil individuals, and so on” [...] (KING, 2008, p. 178). For this reason, the Earth is appropriately considered as a world of tests and atonements (KARDEC, 2003b)

Importantly, Tacey (2004) argued that science itself is not at odds with spirituality as it used to be. In this regard, theorists have striven to provide useful conceptual frameworks for spirituality. For example, Harmer (2010) proposes a holistic conceptual model of spirituality composed of four concentric and interdependent circles, namely: conceptual complexity – which lies in a deeper level of personality and represents how an individual forms, maintains, and interprets spiritual beliefs and experiences; spiritual beliefs, which are constituted of the universal values hold by an individual inspired or not by a religious doctrine; spiritual presence, which moderates, so to speak, the spiritual principles and spiritual path; and finally the spiritual practices that consist of a set of activities or practices toward exploring spirituality. The author suggests that his conceptual model can be useful in several domains, but particularly in leadership development. Liu and Robertson (2011), in turn, provide a spirituality continuum, which covers distinct levels of self-identity. Rather, it is proposed that lower spirituality is derived from a more independent self-construal (i.e., a low level of connection between the self and others). By contrast, the higher spirituality denotes a more interdependent self-construal (i.e., greater interconnection between self and others). The model also presents two intermediate stages, that is, relational and collective self-identity. Interestingly, it has also been advocated that “In its broadest terms, spirituality is more than just another object of study” (KING, 2010, p. 246). Besides, King (2008) suggests that three interdependent understandings of spirituality have been developed so far, namely, lived experiences, a wide range of teachings and counsels, and spirituality as a field of study.

The stances where spirituality works out

Contemporary research outlines very different stances that are somewhat subject to the domain of the concept of spirituality. Overall, it is clear that distinct streams of research have provided theoretical development of this topic. For example, the most explored vein focuses on the individual, given that spirituality is construed, in this way, as a process strongly grounded on subjective, fluid, and idiosyncratic perception (ASHFORTH; PRATT, 2003). Furthermore, it usually leads to self-reflection that culminates in identifying weaknesses that need to be fixed (JOHNSON, 2009). As suggested above, the individual is always the major agent of a spiritual transformation. As such, an authentic spiritualized leader tends to change the mindset, as well as inspiring almost everyone around him/her in a very positive, helpful, and beneficial manner.

Nonetheless, as previously highlighted, spirituality has gained broader understanding throughout the last decades. In this sense, researchers have also proposed spirituality as the essence of management systems. Thus, all stakeholders that are somewhat entwined with one’s business should be target of caring, concern, and dignity (MITROFF, 1998). Similarly, Johnson (2009) argues that “Spiritually motivated individuals and organizations strive to live by universal principles such as love, truthfulness, and respect for human rights and dignity [...]” (p. 79).

These proposals exhibit a substantial theoretical advance, given that some companies around the world still treat their employees as slaves. Following this line of reasoning, it is also suggested that a larger framework of spirituality embraces the issues of social justice, equity, diversity, the marginalized, the unheard, and children (BLANTON, 2007). Going further, King (2008) posits that an integral spirituality should comprise both personal and social concerns. In doing so, it would encompass punctual

global problems that have been causing increasingly widespread concern. Rather, such spirituality would emphasize social issues linked to civil society, economy, business, management, and governance. Obviously, this is an absolutely inclusive view in which both personal and the deeply social transformation of society are equally addressed. Understood in this way, therefore, we live in a suitable moment in this planet to take advantage of transformative potential derived from spiritual knowledge for the betterment of human community.

Its development and practices

Assuming that spirituality is in fact a human need, then all this discussion leads to the imperative of its development in order to extract its best properties. In a sense, when one pays heed to this need it appears that the heart, will, mind, intellect, and awareness tend to dovetail in an optimal manner so as to reach the ultimate reality or the divine (TEASDALE, 1997). Furthermore, "All life needs tending, nurturing, caring for, and human life especially requires physical, mental, and moral care for body, mind, spirit, and soul. *That means human life needs spirituality like the body needs breath and blood to flourish*" (KING, 2008, p. 177, italics added).

In addition, there is some evidence that "Ever more people are becoming conscious of the need for a spirituality that is commensurate with the deepest aspirations of our world" (KING, 2008, p. 188). Accordingly, the attainment of spiritual ends engenders worthwhile, unified, and meaningful experiences of lives (e.g., EMMONS, 1999). Further, as put by Stoltz-Loike (1997), "*Spirituality represents another side of us, and this side grows or shrinks depending on the amount of time we invest in its development*" (p. 152, italics in the original). It is undeniable that the personal transformation toward embracing more spiritualized principles demands the pursuing of noble goals (e.g., meaningful, valuable, and purposeful). In other words, "It involves the emptying of oneself", as suggested by Emmons (1999, p. 91). In a related vein, King (2008) argues that this *spiritual hunger* may be conducive to "a life of deeper significance than that of material goods, consumerism, and exploitative capitalism" (p. IX). In a more transcendent level, a spiritual message channeled by the spirit *Emmanuel* through the medium Francisco Cândido Xavier⁴ shed more light on this subject.

Spiritual growth, with its blessings of light, is also an instructional course.

Students who enroll in school but then constantly skip classes only abuse the institution, because merely enrolling does not mean they are taking advantage of their classes. Unless they learn the alphabet, students will never be able to put words together, and without words, they will never be able to put a sentence together.

An identical process applies to the evolution of the spirit (XAVIER, 2013, p. 215, italics added).

As spirituality has been conceptualized as a form of handling with "ordinary life" and "its daily relationships and responsibilities" conducive to a better comprehension of our global environment (KING, 2010), so its development implies a deeper understanding about our role in this dimension of life. Certainly, we are living a corporeal life to carry out a useful mission, regardless of our religious beliefs. Rather, people from all walks of life are enjoying an earthly existence to develop their potentialities and employ their capabilities to help the progress of humankind. Bear in mind that such goals are obviously the cornerstone to engender the world betterment and people spiritual transformation.

⁴ Francisco Cândido Xavier (1910-2002), also known as Chico Xavier, was one of the world's most distinguished mediums. Astonishingly, he psychographed 412 books during his life and never admitted to being the author of any of them. He used to say that he just wrote what the spirits told him. For this reason, he never accepted a cent derived from sales of those books. Importantly, Chico Xavier's spirits' books sold more than 20million copies and he gave all the copyrights to charity institutions and Spiritism Doctrine groups since the first book was published.

Taken together, it seems that the core of one's spiritual development is entwined with a strong commitment to do well and reciprocate somehow the received help and support. Such a conclusion is reinforced by Jesus Christ's teaching whereby he warned us: "Therefore all things whatever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthews, 7: 12; Webster's Bible [on-line]). Although, modern spirituality is associated with "lived experiences" related to "our bodies, to nature, to our relationships with others and society" (KING, 2008, p. 4), such understandings are not at odds with ancient teachings. At this juncture, it is worth resorting to Kardec's (2003b) insights related to a "good person" that largely corroborate such a view.

Thus, according to Kardec (2003b), the truly good people fundamentally comply with law, give love and charity, practice self-criticism, and ask themselves if all possible good was done and if anyone may have any reason to complain about them. This kind of individual believes in God, as well as in his goodness, justice, and wisdom. Their submission to God's will is entire. Having faith in the future, they accordingly place spiritual conquests as the centerpiece of their personal aspirations. Furthermore, they accept and understand all setbacks, sufferings, frustrations, and deceptions without complaint.

They really feel good about in providing benefits and services as well as the tears they dry and the comfort they offer to those who are suffering. In a larger measure, they enjoy being servant citizens by helping humanity without thinking in personal rewards. Importantly, the imperative of doing good always works out as a compass to them. They are benevolent with anyone and do not care about people's race or beliefs, given that they regard all men and women as their truly brothers and sisters. The good persons are described as humble persons, which repudiate the idea of having their talents pointed out in detriment of others.

On the contrary, they appreciate to highlight the potential and qualities of their peers. Besides, they are not lured by the thought of "any personal advantage" because they acknowledge that everything they have will be taken away some day. In this sense, they are aware that all their assets are ephemeral belongings and, as such, they will be held accountable for any misuse. If they are in charge of higher positions in society, they treat their fellows with kindness and benevolence, because under God's laws all human beings are equal. Finally, they use their power to enhance fellows' morale without pride. Overall, Kardec provided solid arguments concerning how to develop spirituality.

In light of this, it is argued that the development of a spiritual life is closely linked to the practice of wisdom, compassion, and love for our neighbors and ourselves (KING, 2008). Further, it is related to the experience of enjoying full awareness, intensity, freedom, sensibility, opening "to the most subtle and deepest aspects of reality" that lead to the borders by triggering the process of creativity and, for this reason, it has increasingly drawn the attention of artists and scientists (LOZANO; RIBERA, 2004, p. 178). However, King was very accurate by proposing that the core of spiritual development "is the deepening of reflection and an honest attitude toward oneself – an authenticity that recognizes truth and acknowledges a reality greater than oneself" (2008, p. 13). This thought is absolutely consistent with SD principles, which emphasize the need of knowing ourselves and working toward attaining our moral perfection (KARDEC, 2003a, 2003b). In fact, Kardec (2003a) addressed this topic by asking the spirits:

How can intellectual progress lead to moral progress?

'By making man comprehend good and evil; he can then choose between them. The development of free-will follows the development of the intelligence and increases the responsibility of human action' (question nº 780 and respective answer, p. 318, italics in the original).

Building on SD teachings, Vasconcelos (2010) argues that the individuals that are concerned with incorporating virtues into their personalities, acts, and thoughts should consider it as an ongoing exercise. Such an effort may prevent them from suffering in their future lives. Importantly, evidence suggests that all human beings

are capable of developing their own spirituality, regardless of materialistic concerns, fast-paced modern life, increasing competitiveness, or lack of time to practice self-reflection exercises (ROZUEL; KAKABADSE, 2010).

Concerning its implementation, it is worthy of pointing out some acknowledged forms of spiritual practice, which leads to transformative states. Taken together, they basically indicate one's spiritual tools preferences. For instance, it is posited a range of spiritual copying mechanisms, namely, prayer, meditation, sacred reading, presence and participation at liturgy and rituals, music, chanting, yoga, walking, meditation, faith in God, staying tuned to our intrinsic divinity, introspection, helping others, exploring nature, cultivation of silence, retreat, intellectual activism, emotional encounters, and moral activities (ASHFORTH; PRATT, 2003; BACCHUS; HOLLEY, 2005; BIBERMAN, 2009; CAVANAGH et al., 2004; KHANDWALLA, 1998; LOSONCZ, 2004; TEASDALE, 1997). Obviously, spirituality is largely disseminated through religion or religiosity, but it may be also expressed through "a person's attitude and stance toward the outside world, the world of social organization, and to the view he or she has of past, present, and future" (WOLMAN, 2001, p. 128). Further, it implies cultivating states of faith and hopefulness, potentially conducive to suppressing the feelings of fear and pessimism (NUR, 2003).

On the other hand, King (2008) wisely notes that the need of spirituality is equally useful in other terrains such as homes, schools, workplaces, marketplaces, in economics, and politics in order to foster a general perception of spirituality and moral commitment. There is no denying that all institutions can improve substantially by incorporating the knowledge of spirituality. Thus far, research devoted to the workplace has been extremely compelling. For example, many researchers associate the practice of spirituality with work because it enriches one's daily work experiences and contributions aiming at higher good (e.g., GULL; DOH, 2004; KINJERSKI; SKRYPNEK, 2004). In addition, spiritually-based organizations may pursue both material and non-material values, namely: trust, loyalty, success, diversity, pleasure, happiness, care, and profit as a mean to promote general well-being (see, e.g., VASCONCELOS, 2015, for a more comprehensive review). It appears that they are committed to the sharing of wealth, disseminating knowledge, well-being of their customers, engendering progress, and collective well-being (VASCONCELOS, 2011). These companies tend to yield no dangerous or shoddy products, avoid abusing employees, and accept the responsibilities of their products and services for society (MITROFF, 2003). Nevertheless, companies that build on the notion of spirit are usually engaged in treating their employees with dignity and respect, not as economic agents or just as inputs of production (PFEFFER, 2003). In sum, these organizations appear to be engaged in doing good to humanity (FRY; MATHERLY; OUIMET, 2010; MARQUES, 2007; MILLIMAN et al., 1999; PAVLOVICH; CORNER, 2009; VASCONCELOS, 2008).

Similarly, SD teachings and writings cover individuals, society, politics, environment, technology, nature, and organizations responsibilities as well (e.g., PAIVA, 2014; TRIGUEIRO, 2010; VASCONCELOS, 2009). In this regard, the internationally acknowledged medium Divaldo Pereira Franco⁵ psychographed a message from the spirit of *Joanna de Ângelis* specifically related to the role of organizations. In her view, although companies have made inroads into the betterment of life, they are also accountable for many disruptions and miseries worldwide like moral, economic, and social violence (FRANCO, 2004). In fact, it is clear that organizations have to implement considerable improvements in order to better meet human needs. Nonetheless, we cannot forget that if companies often offer undesirable or shameful contributions to society, it is the result of their people's low level of spirituality and held values.

⁵ Divaldo Pereira Franco (1927-) is currently regarded as the most prolific living medium worldwide given that he has already psychographed (i.e. channeled through psychic communications) 255 books and has sold more than 8 million copies. These books were translated into 17 languages. He is a restless spokesman of SD tenets having given more than 13,000 speeches in more than 2,000 Brazilian cities and 64 countries located in 5 continents. He has spoken at conferences in almost 50 universities located in different countries of South and North America, Europe and Africa. He has also received around 700 honors from American, Canadian, and Brazilian universities, as well as one honorary doctoral degree (FRANCO, 2014).

Potential benefits

The potential benefits derived from the spiritual practices are noteworthy. Such a sensitive issue also deserves an analysis for the sake of its impact on human life. Accordingly, one must bear in mind that spiritual experiences do not hinder us from handling the twists and turns of life, but they can otherwise improve our psychological health (NOBLE, 2001; VAN DIERENDONCK, 2012). In a broader sense, the notion of spirituality enhances endeavors, revitalizes individuals and groups, and restores their hope (KORAC-KAKABADSE; KOUZMIN; KAKABADSE, 2002). As an inner strength ready to be explored, it can trigger the sense of innovation and inspiration on (KATES, 2002). King (2008) notes that the spiritual knowledge may provide the necessary energy and insights needed to transform people, workplaces, and global society. Within this perspective, spiritual strengths may lead to excellence in corporate decision-making, interpersonal relationships, and organizational culture. In an individual instance, it may enhance the intellect, sensitivity (particularly toward one's fellows and nature), the sense of altruism, prudence, and the capability of choosing the best paths in life. As pointed out by Thaker (2009), "progress will not be focused only towards increase in luxurious comforts and worldly profits; it does not lead to channeling wealth and power into the hands of only a privileged few" (p. 187).

If spirituality has "the potential to provide balanced perspectives on all manner of organizational issues", as suggested by Crossman (2010, p. 599), then it may offer the same benefit for individuals in their personal problems, challenges, and dilemmas. After all, anecdotal evidence indicates that many people around the world want to be nurtured by a vision containing elements of hope, flourishing, and life abundance. Indeed, spiritual knowledge and wisdom can feed our souls and the planet (KING, 2011). When spirituality is rightly understood, it strengthens our purpose of life, self-esteem, and positive affect (KASHDAN; NEZLEK, 2012; VAN DIERENDONCK, 2012). Furthermore, it is closely intertwined with basic dimensions of human life such as intrinsic motivation, leadership, interconnectedness, simplicity, moderation, and happiness (BOUCKAERT, 2011). In turn, managers may benefit themselves by keeping abreast of these themes. In doing so, they may start to consider their career challenges under the framework of a higher purpose or noble mission, as well as performing their duties inspired by values such as tolerance, alterity and friendship, particularly when they need to work in different cultures with foreign customs. In contrast, spiritual knowledge may bother some people by subtly forcing them to leave their comfort zone. Therefore, it may be a painful process to enact, especially to less spiritualized individuals, that is, those unable to see entirely the benefits from it.

Finally, the development of spirituality does not depend on religious beliefs or structures. Again, religions may eventually help the individuals to find out their spirituality (i.e., their inner universe), but the power of changing and transformation lie on them, that is, on their own spirits' will. As a result, the task to incorporate the wisdom derived from it is always a solitary endeavor. In this regard, religions may be, at best, a path to inspire it.

Implications, challenges, and conclusions

As expected, the concept of spirituality has many implications and challenges clearly outlined by research. First of all, it demands a personal recognition and the acceptance of individual responsibility that needs to be developed toward the understanding of building the common good, the interconnection with all life spheres, as well as the motivation of serving mankind and planet (GARCIA-ZAMOR, 2003). Second, one must bear in mind that "Spirituality cannot be bought and sold" (PORTH; STEINGARD; MCCALL, 2003, p. 251). As previously highlighted, it demands huge efforts to be developed and practiced on a daily basis. Third, it is unreasonable to expect that the betterment of the planet, organizations, society, and humanity will be achieved without the strong commitment to developing and practicing spirituality

on a larger scale. Definitely, we are more than a material organism or a simple body (KARDEC, 2003a; THOMPSON, M., 2004). Forth, we and our institutions need to incorporate universal values and spiritual literacy; otherwise, our civilization could be destroyed or at least seriously compromised. Fifth, as remarked by Lázár (2004), "Spirituality challenges economics by looking for humanity not in the material wealth, but in the inner wealth, in creative and responsible being" (p. 88).

On the other hand, perhaps we never had as many opportunities to research spirituality as we have nowadays (e.g., EMMONS, 1999; TACEY, 2004). In fact, there are clear research avenues to be explored. For example, it is important to peruse how people (i.e., particularly, CEOs, managers, politics, and rank-and-file workers) handle with the topic of spirituality. How do they develop, if so, their own spirituality or, stated differently, how do they nurture their souls? Further, it is tantamount to identify how they construe the concept of spirituality and how does it influence their lives? How do they define the practice of spirituality? How do they apply it in their work? In a related vein, one can explore which forms they use to keep abreast of this subject. Taken together, these are some research questions that may deserve empirical examination.

In essence, "We need ideas to think and work with, to inspire and transform us. To consciously develop spiritual literacy by providing education and fostering spiritual awakening is one such idea" (KING, 2008, p. 194). Some authors conclude that institutions are incapable of being spiritualized (cf. CALVANI, 2014). Nonetheless, the evidence gathered here shows that by developing our own spirituality we can transform ourselves and our creations, including society, organizations, and institutions. In addition, it is worth pointing out that the polysemic nature of spirituality encompasses different instances, roles, and aspects. In other words, theory exhibits an ample understanding about the meaning and scope of spirituality and, in so doing, it is aligned with SD tenets. More specifically, Kardec's (2003c) investigations showed that "*the spiritual element has an active part in the economy of the universe*" (p. 20, italics added). Overall, the dual approach of this endeavor reveals that both science and religion are in accordance that the spiritual element permeates all things.

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