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## Inter-Spirituality and the Renewal of Social Practices

This concluding essay seeks to highlight some important insights in a small selection of essays in this *Routledge International Handbook of Spirituality and Society*, for the purpose of outlining the horizons which will draw the study of spirituality forward into the future. Some of the frontiers which are discussed are: movement beyond dialogue with single disciplines to multi-disciplinary studies such as spirituality, psychology, pharmacology and anthropology; spirituality will move from a self-referential analysis to an integral view. Spirituality study will be supported by the "deep" and "slow" movements in various disciplines. Spirituality researchers will engage with living communities into the future so as to refine and test emerging insights. In a university environment spirituality researchers will be a hub of engagement across the full range of disciplines of a campus; no longer boundaried by liberal arts / humanities frameworks. Spirituality researchers will be challenged to develop new research methodologies to capture the phenomenon of spirituality, as it manifest itself on new frontiers. In engaging spirituality frameworks in the professions today, it may be necessary to step outside familiar traditions and enter into the world of inter-spirituality. We are also growing in awareness of the reception filters already in place in those studying spirituality and must work harder to identify and engage these filters in presenting spiritual

classics. Finally, will seek expression in the idiom of the age; the social media platforms which are reshaping human identity.

The prevalence of academic contributors in the collection illustrates how in today's society interest is growing in the spirituality foundations of higher education disciplines. It is clearly evident that a significant proportion of higher education specialisms are beginning to incorporate explorations of the spiritual dimension into their teaching and research. In particular, it is evident that spirituality is of significance for professional and vocational subject areas, where practitioners are ultimately required to have regard for the full range of needs of their service users / clients – including their spiritual requirements. In this context we have seen that spirituality presents many challenges to those attempting either to incorporate a spiritual dimension into their teaching and training practices, or to conduct their studies with specific spiritual values, principles or methodologies in mind. Bringing so many professional contributors together in this volume, for the purpose of the academic exploration of spirituality in society and the professions may point to new opportunities for inter-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary dialogues into the future. A selection of eight fields, within which the frontiers of such dialogue are indicated, are outlined below.

**Psychology**

Ralph W. Hood, Jr. (University of Tennessee at Chattanooga) argues that *religion* and *spirituality* are largely *interdependent* phenomena with persons identifying as "both religious and spiritual", "neither religious nor spiritual", "more religious than spiritual", or "more spiritual than religious". Within this framework Hood emphasizes that psychology which accepts the reality of transcendent experience, sees spirituality as inherent in human nature.

Accepting spirituality as integral to human psychology is possible and some psychologists have already begun to develop *psychology* as an inherently *spiritual discipline*. (Miller 2012; Friedman & Hartelius 2013)

Within psychology, mystical experience is of particular interest as an experience of unity, of merging as one with a reality in which subject and object no longer exist as truly separate entities. Hood outlined how the empirical study of mysticism clusters around three major findings. First, mystical experience is a common experience reported by many persons across a large variety of cultures. Second, mystical experiences can be directly cultivated. They can be been seen as a positive virtue or a goal of consciousness to be achieved. There are practices that facilitate such experiences, including prayer, mediation, sensory isolation, and immersion in nature. Third, numerous drugs (many naturally occurring) can be used to facilitate mystical experience. This latter form of mystical experience, arising from the use of entheogens, invites dialogue with *pharmacologists* and *anthropologists*, in particular. Thus the study of spirituality into the future will move beyond bilateral exchanges such as a dialogue with psychology, instead spirituality will need to undertake multilateral engagements in order to more deeply understand the emerging mystical turn in society.

**Philosophy**

David Rousseau (Centre for Systems Philosophy, Hull University, UK) claimed that contemporary philosophy is not only influenced by modern notions of spirituality but is also contributing to the development of spirituality. He asserted that while spirituality is practice-oriented, philosophy is reflection oriented. The latter is a discipline of inquiry that *questions*

the *assumptions* behind worldview tenets and tries to work out objective reasons for advocating types of attitudes and kinds of practical action.

Rousseau suggested that philosophy, by seeking ways in which the truth, falsehood or likelihood of spiritual beliefs can be assessed, may make an important contribution to the evolution of spirituality in contemporary society. This is a break from the historical situation in which spiritual beliefs were grounded in religious teachings that are typically not open to question, and hence constrained in terms of their evolution. Rousseau asserted that we cannot be indifferent to philosophy's quest to clarify the authenticity of spirituality, nor the prospect of scientific research that reinforces, rather than demeans, spiritual worldviews.

The place of spirituality in a contemporary systemic world view as proposed by Rousseau is replicated in economic paradigms such as the "regenerative economy". This paradigm suggests that, instead of trying to find a globalized one-size-fits-all approach to global development, it is vital to recognize that each community consists of a mosaic of peoples, traditions, beliefs, and institutions uniquely shaped by culture, local environment, and changing human needs. (Arterian Chang 2018) Interaction between *philosophy* and *economics* will therefore be mutually enlightening for the conceptual development of spirituality as an integral discipline for development and economic sustainability.

Indeed, the scholarly environment that exists today is conducive to undertaking interdisciplinary and integral research so as to grasp the complex character of interrelated processes and phenomena occurring in society. This type of research has brought us to the realization of the fact that it is impossible to understand what is happening in our world today without taking into account the mutual links between nature and culture as well as their

multiple conditionings. The concept of integral ecology proposed by Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato si* constitutes an attempt at taking such a holistic approach to spirituality in relation to contemporary environmental challenges.

**Agriculture**

John Ikerd (University of Missouri) argued in his paper that spirituality is an essential aspect of agriculture. However, since the mid-1900s, the spiritual connections of food and farming were sacrificed in bringing modern science and industrial technologies to agriculture. Over time, it has become evident that the industrial food system is not sustainable in any sense: it brings a large and growing number of unintended negative consequences – ecological, social, and economic.

Movements which promote organic and locally grown foods are reclaiming the sacred dimensions of food and farming. Ikerd warns that ecological integrity, social responsibility, and economic viability are essential conditions for sustainable agri-food systems. Based on Aldo Leopold's (1949) "land ethic" Ikerd suggested an ethic of sustainability: "A thing is right when it tends to enhance the quality and integrity of both human and non-human life on Earth. A thing is wrong when it tends otherwise". He proposed the view that caring for other people it is not a sacrifice because caring and sharing add quality and richness to our lives. Similarly, it is not a sacrifice to care for the Earth for the benefit of future generations because it also gives purpose and meaning to our lives.

This essay draws attention then to cognate movements in society which can partner the current evolution in thought regarding the nature of spirituality. Indeed the phrase "deep

ecology", which was coined in 1973 by the Norwegian philosopher and mountaineer Arne Naess implicitly introduced the turn to spirituality in environmental / agricultural issues. Departing from the "wise-use" conservation philosophy pioneered by Gifford Pinchot, deep environmentalism finds kindred spirits in Henry David Thoreau and John Muir whose writing drew attention to the inherent spirit and value in the natural world. Partnerships with those working for the *"deep" approach* to their profession will provide natural partners in unfolding the conceptual framework of spirituality.

**Urbanism**

Brian R. Sinclair (University of Calgary) highlighted in his essay how the world is now more urban than rural, with massive migration to cities by people dreaming of a better life, escaping from poverty and chasing the chance to thrive. While the advantages of cities are many, their problems are daunting. Diseases, pollution, congestion, and stress are daily obstacles confronting city dwellers. Sinclair pointed out that strong design and planning accepts the pragmatic as a given, while pursuing the inclusion of the poetic. In the intricate balance of the pragmatic and the poetic the spiritual is likely often likely to manifest. With basic needs realized, users of urban spaces and places seek the opportunity to experience beauty, encounter solitude, attain flow and achieve meaning in ways that enhance emotions, accentuate perception and heighten pleasure.

The depth of meaning encapsulated in urban spaces, places and installations correlates with the richness of spiritual experience in the city. Places in many aspects influence our identities, inspire our activities, inform our lives and contribute to our rootedness, health and happiness.

Sinclair suggested that a fuller understanding of the poetics of place, and the related role of design and designers can improve the sustainability of cities for all residents.

Julian Agyeman's (Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning, Tufts University) has however highlighted that it is necessary to speak of sustainabilities - sustainability in the plural - because there can be no universal prescription for sustainable urban practice. Rather, policy and planning must be tuned to the increasing ethnic and class diversity of urban areas, or what others have called "cities of difference." Taking the case of access to fresh food in the city, he has highlighted the error of thinking that community gardens in "food deserts" will be welcomed by everyone. What might really meet the deepest desires of many inhabitants of food deserts may actually be a full service grocery store that's available to the inhabitants of food oases. Meeting the deepest hungers of a population actually requires interaction between planners, *cultural critics* and *social justice analysts*. The input of living communities into the future of the study of spirituality will be a non-negotiable frontier.

**Tourism**

Gregory Willson (Edith Cowan University, Perth) and Alison McIntosh (AUT University, Auckland) note that the roots of modern tourism can be found in early pilgrimages and other religiously motivated journeys. Nevertheless that the relatedness of *spirituality* and *tourism* as academic disciplines has grown markedly in recent years, since travel has become an important element in individuals' search for spiritual transformation. Scholars in the boundary space between spirituality and tourism argue that a wide range of contemporary travel experiences can be considered spiritual as they may facilitate experiences that contribute to an

individual's quest for meaning, transcendence and connectedness. Such scholars have identified a need to explicate more clearly how tourism experiences and settings can offer moments for connection, reflection and contemplation.

Tourism geographers have been contributing too in this 'spiritual turn' through their analysis of the relationship landscapes and spiritual seeking. For Kong (2004) sacred places are often contested spaces, and it is the making of a particular place into a sacred space that is of particular interest in geographies of the sacred. Sacred spaces exceed the narrow definitions of a religious sites, and this is one aspect of Foley's (2010) work on holy wells in Ireland that is particularly exciting: the "interplay of individual and cultural meanings". It is the locational and relational interplay of such meanings that contribute to the significance of a site. Such webs of meaning allow for complex and nuanced responses to landscapes as sources of spiritual transformation. Arriving at a deeper understanding of the identity of the spiritual tourist will necessarily involve new research methods. The fact that spirituality tourists often keep diaries of their journeys may provide a key to a relevant research approach. Data gathering through oral diaries could be a possible approach.  In this case spiritual tourists would be requested to set aside 5–15 minutes to record stories of their experiences on digital recorders, with prompts for suggested kinds of stories such as religious or spiritual experiences and practices if those were important.

**Policing**

Jonathan Smith (Salmon Personal Development Ltd.) and Ginger Charles (Saybrook University) observe that in many countries there is an increasing levels of dissonance, dis-ease, and distrust between a police force and the communities it serves. On many occasions

*police organizations* are not reflective of healthy group dynamics and instead mirror conflicts in the traumatized communities. Smith and Charles argue that police leaders have to make a shift towards a way of being in which the focus is on *serving* - as opposed to commanding and controlling. They suggest that this shift requires a more transcendental perspective which embraces spiritual frameworks.

Smith and Charles believe that the central issue in healthy policing is *self-awareness*. It is about police leaders slowing down and taking time out to explore and question the pressures and influences on them, look at their own values and belief systems, and how these influence practice. It is about leaders searching for their higher purpose, reflecting on why they are a leader and a police officer,

But policing practice is also being enriched by looking further afield, including the warrior philosophy of martial arts which has always been in close contact with spirituality. Oosterling has pointed out that due to the cultural embedding of martial arts in the Buddhist tradition spirituality has always been a crucial aspect of martial arts. This spiritualized 'fighting spirit' is focused on active pacifism, i.e. on the compassionate practice of non-violence. Within the vast spectrum of contemporary articulations of martial spirituality one specific tradition is proving to be extremely helpful for modern policing, the Japanese way of the warrior knights or *bushido* as the precursor of Japanese kendo.

In the light of the above developments, it is becoming evident that *Inter-spirituality*, as a reciprocal sharing of wisdom and contemplative gifts, in which the insights of a non-familiar tradition may help to affirm, deepen, and direct the other's journey. It seems that Inter-spirituality may be a framework that can be embraced by a new generation seeking

enlightened policing, while also allowing for inter-generational bridges to be built between seasoned police officers, wisdom traditions and new recruits.

**Visual Arts**

James McCullough (Lindenwood University) states that many people experience the visual arts as an alternative form of discourse or meaning-making. He suggests that the increased interest between spirituality and the visual arts lies in the cultural and intellectual dynamics of postmodernism. *Postmodern spirituality* may be more *visual* than textual, more affective and imaginative than doctrinaire and systematic.

A kind of "visual training" is recommended that includes (i) a heightened awareness of the explicit and implicit messaging involved in pictorial forms of communication along with (ii) the development of critical practices that interrogate images that are casually encountered and consumed and (iii) a socially and spiritually responsible "visual training" which involves a selectivity of formative imagery grounded in an expanded repertoire of options.

McCullough asserts that art does not merely "report" on a given subject matter but presents it from some committed stance. Such a stance is pictorially communicated in many ways. Portrait subjects done in profile, full view or three-quarter view; persons made the object of gaze or returning the gaze back to the viewer; objects given depth or deprived of depth; objects viewed from above, horizontally, or from below; paintings rendered realistically, surrealistically, partially abstract, or fully abstract. Seeing things from the perspective of these stances is what it means for art to change the way we look at the world.

In particular, reception theory has articulated how the meaning of an image or text is located somewhere between the reader and the text and that each person will decode the text slightly differently depending on their background, cultural life experiences and the access they have to traditions which have shaped interpretation. In the light of a greater awareness of visual intelligence and the operations of reception dynamics, the teaching of spirituality into the future will be required to give more attention to the influence of hegemonic viewpoints in shaping interaction with classical texts.

**Cyberspace**

Paola Di Maio (Palpung Sherabling Institute, India) asserts that spirituality in cyberspace relates two contemporary issues: on one hand, spirituality as a domain of inquiry ranging from introspection to religion and the meaning of life, and on the other hand, the leading edge of technological and scientific progress as manifest in *cyberspace*. The internet is brimming with information and knowledge of all sorts, and much of it can be identified with the domain of spirituality. From shamanism to yoga, from the hidden gospels to various conjectures speculations and hypotheses about new findings pertaining to religion, a plethora of manuscripts, journals, handbooks manuals and videos, all are easily accessible in cyberspace.

Di Maio believes that cyberspace can be used not only to disseminate and access knowledge about spirituality in whatever denomination and language, but also to help to cross reference, cross examine, validate, test various hypotheses related to spirituality, and to help the alignment and integration not only of the axioms and beliefs held by the different traditions, but also the internal consistency of the various sources of spiritual knowledge. Di Maio suggests that the mindful adoption of cyberspace can support and facilitate the fulfillment of

human and cognitive and creative potential, so that it  can be used to inform, increase general awareness and stimulate responsible and virtuous behavior and encourage cooperation

While di Maio has drawn attention to the flourishing of spirituality interests in cyberspace, across a broad spectrum of communities and contexts; there is a further development that will challenge spirituality studies into the future. The expanding presence of spirituality in cyberspace will continue, but there will also be the growth of a specific spiritual cyberspace through the development of bespoke apps.  The virtual realities being generated in cyberspace will include virtual spiritual realities. As the developing of the printing press liberated spiritual texts for use amongst the general public; so the development of virtual spiritual domains will open up new expressions of spirituality.

In this Handbook spirituality has been understood as personal (and collective) experience and value orientation which transcend ego-centeredness and embrace wholeness and oneness. Spirituality implies less emphasis on materialistic values such as money, possessions, image, and status, and more focus on the non-materialistic values of happiness, compassion, self-realization, and inter-connectedness. The essays of the Handbook illustrate how *spiritually grounded social practices* can lead to better and more satisfying outcomes for persons and organizations than practices exercised on purely materialistic basis. Spirituality does not deny the importance of the material world and the material dimensions of human existence but prioritizes ultimate concerns over transient realities. Re-focusing professions on the primacy of ultimate concerns may catalyze substantial renewal of social practices which brings the hope of a more ecological, compassionate and peaceful being and functioning in society.

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